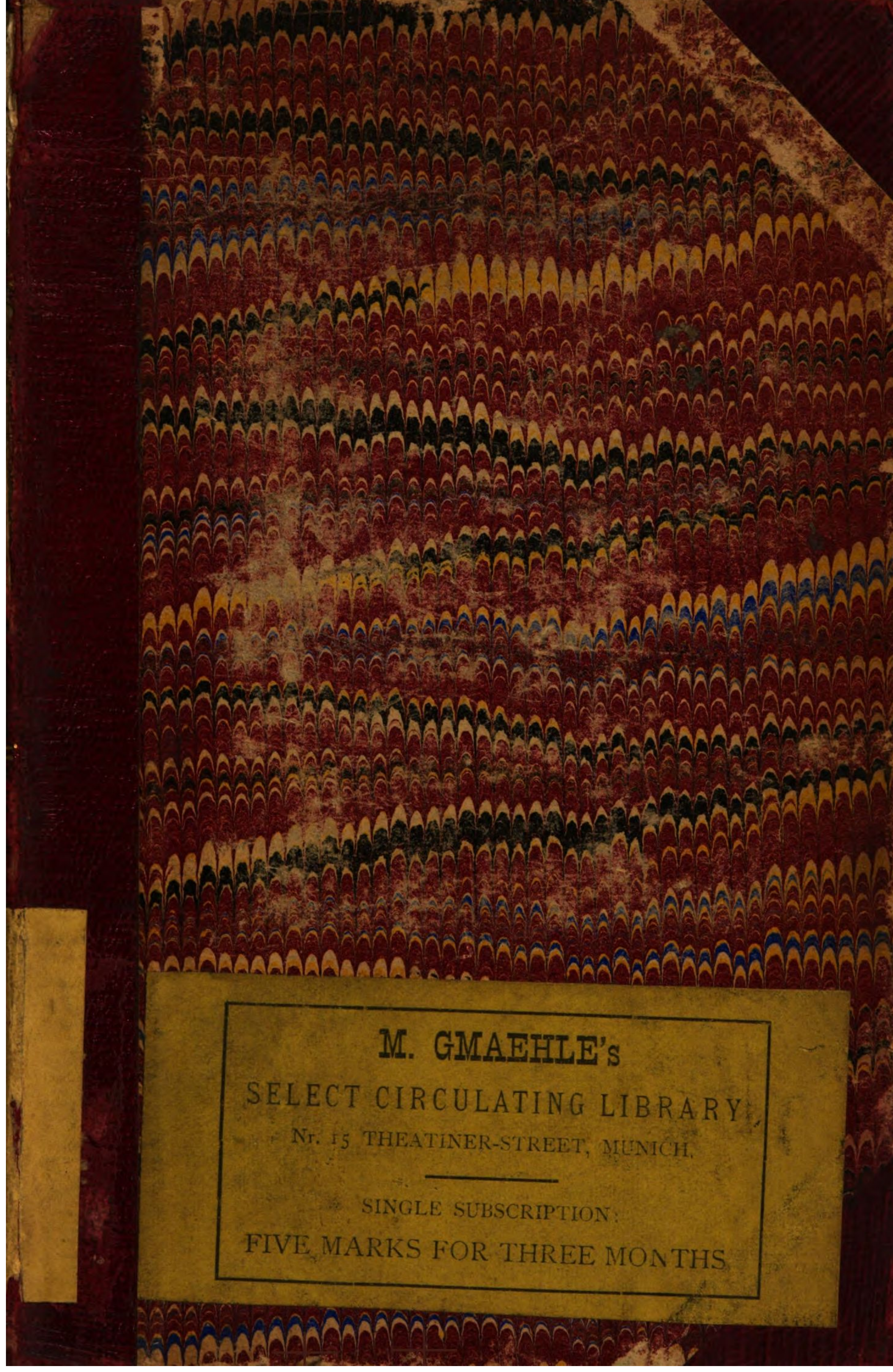




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# A PRISONER OF WAR IN RUSSIA :

MY EXPERIENCES AMONGST THE REFUGEES,  
WITH THE RED CRESCENT.

BY

COL. WILLIAM JESSER COOPE,  
IMPERIAL OTTOMAN GENDARMERIE.

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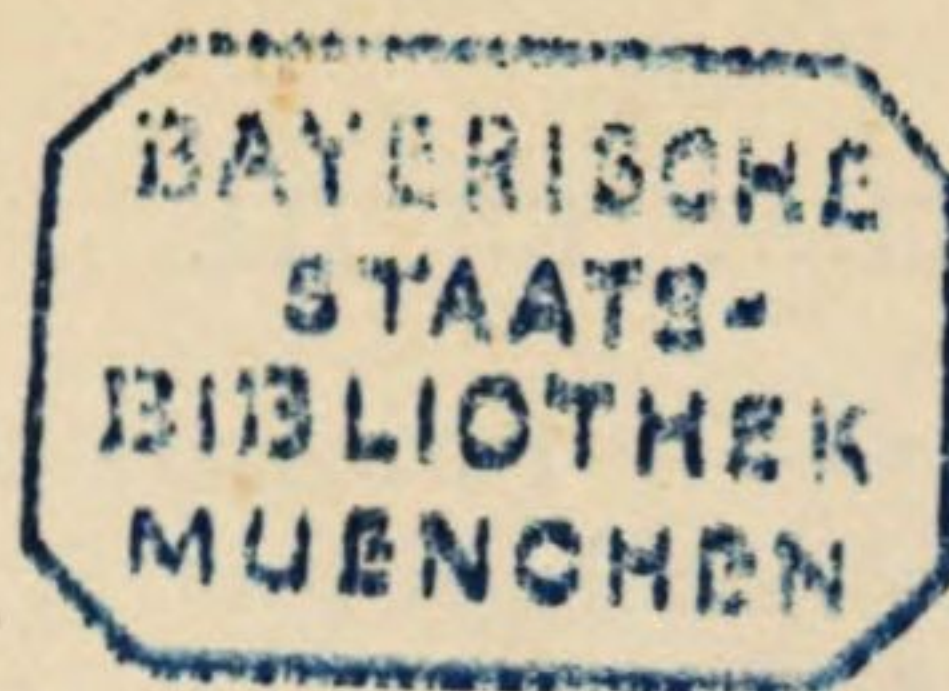
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1891

The first of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured. The weather was very hot, and the ground was very dry. The crops were much injured, and the people were very poor. The weather was very hot, and the ground was very dry. The crops were much injured, and the people were very poor.

CHAPTER

The second of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured. The weather was very hot, and the ground was very dry. The crops were much injured, and the people were very poor.

1892

1892





## A PRISONER OF WAR IN RUSSIA.

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### CHAPTER I.

Gallipoli—Baron Zubovitz—His ride from Vienna to Paris—His inflated saddles—Intends to swim the Bosphorus—Hungarian legion—The empty Golden Horn—Hammals—Herculean strength—The dogs in my street—An interesting canine event—Proposed kid-glove manufactory—The proposal rejected with horror.

THE following pages will consist partly of what I have myself actually seen or heard, and partly of what I have thought—that is, of reflections on what I consider myself to have observed. It smacks, perhaps, of presumption in me, after an acquaintance with Turkey (on this my latest visit) of little more than six months, to obtrude a judgment upon so wide and complex a subject as the character, condition, and capabilities of the races that people it. Others, however,



labouring under the greater disqualifications of a hastier visit to a narrower area of the country, and of fewer and less varied opportunities of studying its inhabitants, seem to have no misgivings in announcing their impressions to the public with almost the authority of revelations. I take courage, therefore, to submit my own views also to consideration, leaving my readers to take them at what they are worth.

The Austrian Lloyd's steamer "Danubio," in which I was a passenger, entered the Dardanelles at daybreak of the 22nd of May, 1877. The occupant of the cabin next to mine, and a most agreeable comrade on board, was Baron Zubovitz, whose famous ride on horseback from Vienna to Paris in six days made him at the time, some few years back, quite an European hero. I don't know that that feat, though remarkable as an exhibition of endurance, was at all of a higher or more useful order than Gale's late walk, or that it can be put quite in the same rank with Messrs. Webb and Cavill's swim across the Channel. His passage of the Danube, on the other hand, which earned him the celebration



of a picture in the *Illustrated London News*, did teach us something, perhaps as much in its way as Captain Boyton's apparatus. It will be remembered that Baron Zubovitz crossed the Danube on horseback, when the great river was in full flood, by the help of an inflated saddle. The baron's present purpose was to press the adoption of his inflated saddles on the Turkish Government. He contemplated also the formation of a Hungarian legion for the service of Turkey in the war then commencing; and lastly he was bent on swimming the Bosphorus on horseback, as he had formerly crossed the Danube. The two first schemes came to nothing, as might have been anticipated by any less sanguine person, and I never heard that the third was ever actually attempted. I should have thought that the circumstance of one of the baron's legs (owing to a wound received in action) needing the constant protection and support of a rather complicated and cumbersome steel instrument, would alone have put a veto on any further equestrian feats.

Everybody nowadays has been to Constan-



tinople, and I have consequently no excuse for a description of its general appearance as we approached it. Nevertheless there was one spectacle which struck us with astonishment as we passed between Top'lané and Old Seraglio Point at the entrance of the Golden Horn, and which struck those of us with most astonishment who had been in old times most familiar with Constantinople. This wonderful spectacle was in reality the absence of that sight which the Golden Horn was wont to present. Where was the forest of masts and funnels which used to give the Horn at Galata an air of commercial activity to rival that of the Thames at any single point below London Bridge? The fact is, that already, on the 22nd May, trade was paralyzed, and the generally busy harbour was comparatively deserted. We heard immediately on our arrival that the "state of siege" had been proclaimed that very day in consequence of the *Softas'* demonstration. This circumstance made me regard the want of a passport with more uneasiness than I should otherwise have felt. The *commissionnaire*, however, of the *Hôtel de Byzance*, to



whom I confided my dilemma, reminded me of what I should not have forgotten—the omnipotence of *bakshish* in Turkey. The same talisman afterwards exerted the same sway at the *Douane*.

“Use cannot stale” an Englishman’s ever fresh astonishment at the *hammals* of Constantinople. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that one of these men will carry as much luggage as a four-wheeled London cab. I was not aware that these incomparable porters are all imported from a particular district in Armenia, under the auspices of one enterprising compatriot who, like the *padrone* of a gang of London organ-grinders, makes a fortune out of their ill-remunerated labour. What does physical vigour result from? Not from generous diet certainly. These *hammals*, who will singly carry with ease what any two London porters would refuse to take between them, know no more of meat than they do of beer. Indeed, they get very little farinaceous food, but support their portentous strength almost entirely upon the less nutritive fruits and vegetables, such as cucumbers.



Constantinople has changed greatly since I last saw it, on my way from the Crimea, in 1856. Some might question whether it had so greatly improved. Pera is now almost an European city. Galata is much Europeanized. Even Stamboul is somewhat contaminated by Western innovations. In one respect, however, the *laudator temporis acti* has to regret no disturbance of his prejudices. The pavement, or what you walk on by way of pavement, cannot have been desecrated by repairs since I last limped and hobbled on it twenty-one years ago. I could also almost fancy I recognized the same dogs, with the same sweetness of temper, and the same patches of mange. There were two living in the gutter of my street, the *Rue de Pologne*, who seemed to recognize me, at least by tradition from their forbears in the same locality. This pair used invariably to escort me to the limit of their district, beyond which the jealousy of other dogs would not allow them to venture, licking my hand whenever they found opportunity; and this, as it seemed, not from any mercenary motive, for I never fed them, but from pure, overflowing good-will. Some



travellers describe the dogs of Stamboul as ferocious; they certainly do show sometimes a suspicion of strangers, but this is only a form of fidelity to their immediate patrons, the householders of their district. It would indeed be gross ingratitude, of which the canine race has never been accused, if they were insensible to the almost maternal solicitude of which they are the objects on the part of the human population. Has one of these animals given birth to a litter of puppies? The interesting event is no sooner observed than some grave Turk hurries out, with quite unwonted precipitation, bearing a basket, sometimes lined with straw or tow, in which he anxiously deposits the young brood, under the complacent surveillance of the mother, leaving the whole family then snugly ensconced in some convenient mud-hole in the middle of the roadway. It may in one sense jar with my account of the affectionate relations existing between the dogs and men of Constantinople that a proposition was lately made to the authorities to establish a kid-glove manufactory on Government account, the raw material to consist of



the skin of new-born puppies. In another sense, however, the incident rather confirms my description, for the Turkish officials rejected the suggestion with horror. Besides, the projector of the impious scheme was a Greek. Nevertheless it is not all bliss even in Paradise. In some respects the dogs of Constantinople need not be envied even by those at Battersea. With respect to many, perhaps most, of the former, mange, leprosy, and sores of all sorts seem to be (I was going to say) their daily food, since, judging from their gaunt, fleshless frames, they get but little to eat. From one disease only of all those to which dog-flesh is heir do they seem free: I was assured that at Constantinople hydrophobia is unknown.



## CHAPTER II.

The Imperial Ottoman Gendarmerie — Baker Pasha's plan — The Zaptiehrie, or Scotland Yard of Stamboul — Putting you off — A political card — A visit to Scutari hospital — Cigarettes for the wounded — A hero — The cry which rose from the patients — A happy thought — Mr. Barrington Kennett — A bearer corps wanted — Hamdi Pasha — A post on Mehemet Ali Pasha's staff is offered to me — Turkish etiquette, my first lesson in it.

I LANDED at Constantinople on the 22nd May, 1877, to take up the appointment of Brigade-Inspector in the new force of Ottoman Gendarmerie, to organize which the Sultan had granted a firman to Colonel Valentine Baker, after having received from that officer a most able and exhaustive report on the existing force of zaptiehs, together with his scheme for the new one of Gendarmerie to take its place. In this scheme he had divided the force into two corps, each corps comprising



two divisions and each division including three brigades. The first corps was to consist of the whole of the Gendarmerie in European Turkey, the second of that in Asiatic Turkey. The first division would embrace the Eastern half of European Turkey, Rumelia, and Bulgaria; the second, Herzegovina, Bosnia, and Albania; the third division, Asia Minor; and the fourth, Syria and the islands. The twelve brigades to be represented as nearly as possible by the provinces, Rumelia being one, Bulgaria another, &c.

Such is the wonderful talent for putting you off possessed by Turkish officials, that it was not before the 12th August that a document, which any school-boy could have drawn up in half-an-hour, was ready for my signature, and this notwithstanding my daily attendance at the Zaptiehrie (the Scotland Yard of Stamboul) to exercise pressure on the Police Minister. Three months' pay was saved to the Turkish Exchequer by this delay, and perhaps that made it worth while to put up with the daily importunity of the persistent Giaour. In this contract I agreed to give



my services as Brigade Inspector for three years, the Porte engaging to pay me, in gold, through the Ottoman bank, the sum of forty-one liras on the 1st of every month, old reckoning, which corresponds to the 13th of our calendar.

Having spent some months in the dullest capital of Europe without anything beyond the study of Turkish to occupy me, I began to think that they were right who had prophesied that the organization of the Gendarmerie would prove only a political card to be held in the hand of Turkey and displayed when the *pour-parlers* of peace commenced, and then thrown away—in the hope that to have begun the organization would be taken by Europe as an indication of Turkish intention to carry it out to completion when peace should be fully established. Anyhow it was evident that no further steps than the appointment of fifteen Inspectors would be taken to form the corps till the end of the war, especially as Baker Pasha had accepted a command in Mehemet Ali Pasha's army, and was then winning laurels on the field of Eski Djumla. I began therefore somewhat to weary of being



a bold Gendarme of the Turkish Empire, with nothing whatever to do but to draw my pay monthly, which, by the bye, entailed a great deal more trouble than was necessary, as a receipt was required to be delivered to the Ottoman bank every month, countersigned by the Police Minister, who generally made it convenient to be out of the way when wanted for this purpose.

As I said before, I began to weary of this life of idleness, and longed for some real hard work.

Some little time before, when visiting the Turkish wounded in Scutari hospital, in company with Baker Pasha, the Commissioner of Stafford House, and other Englishmen, we had all subscribed to take each patient a package of cigarettes. I had then been struck by the absence of serious wounds; the cases were, with one exception, all slight injuries, mostly in the upper part of the body, or only such wounds as would not prevent a man from walking off the field without assistance. The one exception I refer to is so characteristic of the spirit shown by the Osmanli race in this war, that I think it deserves a place



in these memoirs. The sufferer was Fazuela Pasha, who had been wounded in the arm, the leg, and the side, and had had his horse killed under him while gallantly leading on his men. He had undergone amputation of both the arm and leg a few hours before we saw him, and as the party stood round his bed, one of our number having expressed to him our sympathy, and wishes for a speedy recovery, he said, "Gentlemen, you see before you but half a man : I pray God, however, that that half may die on the battle-field in defence of my country." The cry of "bravo" which the few words this hero had spoken brought to the lips of every Englishman present, sounded to me very like a cheer. I for one turned away with my eyes dimmed by, I suppose, a fly, which at that moment must have got into it. Poor fellow ! he died in a few hours from the effects of the double amputation. He had fought with distinction as a boy of fifteen under Omar Pasha in 1853-54, and in one of the battles of that war had at this tender age carried his wounded father off the field on his back. A nation which possesses many such spirits as Fazuela



Pasha's, ought not to be easily subdued. I have since met many such as Fazuela Pasha, most of them, however, carrying a rifle in the rank and file of the Turkish army. The cry which rose from the patients in that hospital, was, "We long for our wounds to heal, that we may return again to fight for our Padishah." While on the subject, I may state here, that in my extensive subsequent experience of the Turkish wounded, I never met with one single instance of self-mutilation, nor had any of the surgeons, whom I questioned on the subject. I cannot say as much for our own men in the Crimea, where more than one case came under my own observation.

This absence in Scutari hospital of serious cases was only to be accounted for by the conjecture that those who were severely wounded must have succumbed before assistance could be brought to them; and this was clearly the case, as I ascertained afterwards that the Turkish surgeons on the field were totally unprovided with stretchers on which to carry away the wounded.

Here then was an opening for me, the prospect of an employment of a most honour-



able nature in one of the best of causes, that of humanity; I would organize a corps of field-bearers, who should receive preliminary instruction in binding up wounds, stopping hemorrhage, and placing men carefully on stretchers. I would take these men into action, and pick up the wounded as they fell.

I communicated my ideas on the subject to Mr. Barrington Kennett, the well-known Commissioner of the Stafford House Committee, who told me it was the one thing most required for the Turkish wounded, and that he had had it in contemplation to establish something of the kind himself, but had not been able to find anybody to whom he could entrust the charge. He begged I would give him a sketch in writing of my plan, which, with the assistance of many valuable hints from my friend Colonel Norton, I did. Mr. Barrington Kennett hereupon undertook to furnish the funds and medical staff for a special ambulance of this nature, and to place it under my charge, if I could provide the men required for stretcher-bearers.

I accordingly waited upon Hamdi Pasha, the



Police Minister, with my plan translated into Turkish, and asked him, if he approved of it, to furnish me with fifty zaptiehs to form the nucleus of a bearer corps. He was enchanted with it, and I left him feeling sure of success; but my experience of Turkish diplomacy was then very limited compared with what I have since gained. The next day I was summoned to Hamdi Pasha's room in the Zaptiehrie, who then informed me that the day before he had laid my plan before the Council at the Porte. The Council thought my plan excellent, and they would have it put into execution; but they felt it was not the sort of work for one holding the exalted rank of colonel to undertake; if I wanted to see something of the war, there was an appointment on Mehemet Ali Pasha's staff with the army at Shumla at my disposal. I could start by the next boat for Varna. Now I did want to see something of the war, and the offer was very tempting, and had it not been for a certain proclamation of neutrality by her Britannic Majesty I should have jumped at such a golden opportunity, but that proclamation decided me to decline the offer.



I returned to Mr. Barrington Kennett, who was much disappointed at my failure, but took steps in a powerful quarter to have the matter brought especially before the Grand Vizier. That dignitary professed to approve of it, and we began to hope that, after all, the scheme might be carried out ; but some days elapsing without our hearing more on the subject, we thought it time to jog the elbow of the Grand Vizier, who then gave such an excuse as made it apparent that it had never been the intention of the Turkish Government to allow it. Far from it, they would prevent any such plan being carried out, by whomsoever it might be proposed.

A reason for this flashed through my brain some weeks afterwards, as I stood amongst the Russian dead on the battle-field of the first attack upon Teliche. The natural politeness of the Turks, and they are without doubt the most polite people in the world, has made them wonderfully clever at putting a person off without hurting his feelings by giving a positive refusal to his request. A Turk generally knows at once when he is being systematically put off, and ceases to



press his suit ; but the Englishman is not quite so quick, and indeed often succeeds in gaining his point, overcoming by his persistency excuse after excuse made by a polished Turkish official. I have had many proofs of this talent, I will mention one. An order came from the Police Minister that the foreign officers of the gendarmerie were to assist the zaptieh officers, in their duty of visiting the police posts of Stamboul and Pera by night, taking their tour of twenty-four hours' duty according to rota. Now this was not part of our contract ; we were not zaptieh officers, but inspectors of gendarmerie, and Colonel Shuldham's first impulse was the natural one to an Englishman, namely, to decline compliance on that ground ; but Sahir Bey, the one Turkish Inspector appointed, knowing his countrymen better, strongly advised him against doing so, assuring him that a flat refusal would be quite contrary to Turkish etiquette, and would be likely to produce such a bad impression in high quarters as might seriously affect the future of the embryo gendarmerie. He advised, on the contrary, that Colonel Shuldham



should reply that we were quite ready to carry out the wishes of the Police Minister in this matter, as soon as a proper room was provided for an European officer, wherein to pass the twenty-four hours' duty. We knew there was no room available for this purpose: this therefore would be putting it clearly in Turkish fashion that we did not intend to convert ourselves into zaptieh officers. And the device succeeded, for we never heard anything more on the subject.



## CHAPTER III.

The miraculous fishes—The Patriarch's toilet—The monk's prophecy—A legend of St. Sophia—Constantinople fires—The new fire-brigade—A pupil of Captain Shaw's—Galata tower—"Yankin var"—Popular belief as to origin of fires.

DURING the days of enforced idleness, while the affair which was to give me employment was being put in train, I was driven, as a relief and recreation from my painful study of the Turkish language, to revisit some of those sights of Constantinople to which a foreigner almost necessarily gravitates. Thus the circumstances of the political crisis combined, with the old prophecy connected with what are called the "miraculous fishes," to draw me to the very ancient Greek church at Baloukli, just outside the walls of the city. I went on a Sunday, when divine service, according to the ceremonial of the Greek



Church, was being performed with unusual pomp. The patriarch himself officiated, supported by no fewer than seven bishops. It is often alleged against the Greek service that it elicits no warmth, no manifestation of deep interest, in the worshippers: this charge seemed to me partially unfounded. The excitement of the congregation to witness in all its details the dressing and undressing of the Patriarch and various bishops, which process was renewed at short intervals, was extreme, intense, almost frantic. It is true that the rest of the service, what may be called worship proper, was endured with a cold negligence which might be mistaken for contempt. The story of the miraculous fishes has probably been related in print, but I have never happened to meet with it. At the very moment when the terrible Mahmoud II. was carrying Constantinople by assault, a Christian priest of the church at Baloukli, profoundly abstracted in the solemn function of frying fish, was totally unaware that Constantine XIII. had just fallen like an emperor, sword in hand, in vain defence of the ramparts of his capital



hard by. Terrified fugitives, however, soon announced the catastrophe to the engrossed monk. "Pah!" said he in the full assurance of faith; "I will believe that the unbelievers have set foot in Constantinople when I see these fishes return to life and jump from the frying-pan." The words were no sooner out of his mouth than, lo! the half-cooked creatures leaped from the pan into the tank close by and began swimming about. And there, in the tank, they are still. That is to say, there certainly are some fishes in the tank, which may be called rather red than brown on one side and rather brown than red on the other—clear indication of the culinary process they once partially underwent. The story proceeds that the priest, witnessing the prodigy, at once reverently admitted the terrible assurance it conveyed, and thus spoke in the spirit of prophecy:—"Yes, it has pleased the Almighty, for our sins and purification, to humble the true Church under the foot of the infidel. But not for ever: only for a space. In 400 years from to-day, the holy basilica of Santa Sophia, where the barbarous



conqueror now imprints the mark of his blood-stained hand on the wall, and tramples the marble pavement under his horse's hoofs, shall be reclaimed for Christian worship, and the whole race of unbelievers shall undergo the sufferings which they now inflict." I am told that in the Greek quarter of the Fanar this prediction is cherished as confidently as the miracle of the fried fishes is believed. But surely the prophecy, to be punctual, ought to have been fulfilled in 1853. It is true that Prince Menschikoff's attitude at that time gave some promise of its fulfilment; but the Crimean War spoiled the story.

I have given one legend regarding the conquest of Constantinople; I shall fall no lower by repeating another. As the soldiers of Mahmoud II. burst open the barricaded doors of Santa Sophia, they beheld a despairing crowd of women and ecclesiastics kneeling before the high altar, where a priest was invoking a tardy miracle to their rescue. The crowd of fugitives dispersed in terror throughout the basilica; but the officiating priest, taking in his hands the golden vessels



containing the consecrated elements, marched with stately aspect and deliberate step towards the vestiary. For a moment the intruders, awed by his dignity and calmness, abstained from outrage, but only for a moment; and then, while some rushed towards him, others with bare scimitars hurried to intercept his retreat. The priest, seeing his path barred, turned aside, and, with the sacred "host" still in his hands, marched upon a solid wall of masonry, which, wonderful to relate, opened to let him pass, and then closed instantly behind him. The greedy band of pillagers of course assumed the existence of a secret door, and declared that it was there that the monks had their richest treasury. But the closest examination showed that no door had ever been pierced in that solid masonry; while, to put the character of the occurrence beyond doubt, hundreds of devout Greeks may to this day be found willing to aver that they themselves have heard, on the anniversary of the desecration of St. Sophia, the voice of a priest chanting within the wall the anciently uncompleted service of the mass.



It is quite in vain, by the bye, to argue with a Greek of Constantinople that the Church of St. Sophia was so called, not because it was dedicated to any saint or saintess of the name of Sophia, but because it was erected on the site of a temple dedicated to the "divine" (or perhaps rather to the devout) "wisdom"—the *hagia sophia* of philosophy. I am assured, however, by a friend learned in Byzantine history that this latter is the true derivation.

To say that I witnessed several considerable conflagrations while in Constantinople is only to say that I remained there more than a few days; for fires, and on a large scale, are of much more frequent than weekly occurrence. On the top of the Seraskier's Tower, which soars high above Stamboul, and at the tower of Galata on the opposite side of the Golden Horn, watchmen are on the look-out night and day. At the first puff of dark smoke, or gleam of flame, they exhibit in the dark hours a lantern, or, if it be in the daytime, a basket, which is no sooner descried at Top'hane than a cannon-shot announces to the city at large the



calamity which is in progress. Except the mosques and some of the public buildings, the European quarter of Pera, some of the old Genoese houses in Galata, and the solid mansions of the richer Greek families in the Fanar, all the habitations and structures of Constantinople, including many palaces, are of wood. With such odds in its favour, a fire has fine scope, especially as nearly all the machinery for its suppression is of the most primitive. Constantinople now, however, boasts a fire-brigade on the London pattern. This has been organized and is commanded by a Hungarian baron, a pupil of our own redoubtable Captain Shaw, the baron having spent some time in London on purpose to learn his trade from the best master. The Turkish Government have built barracks for this brigade at Takshend, a suburb of Pera, where they may be seen any day going through their exercises. They wear the conventional brass helmet and a neat blue uniform, and appear to have the same zest for warfare with their ruthless enemy as is observable in our own men. A few seconds after the cry of "Yankin var"



“There is fire!” is heard issuing from the powerful lungs of the runner—who, with wand of authority in his hands, legs bare and loins girt, flies with the news of the quarter of the city in which the fire has been seen to break out by the watchers in the tower of Galata—the rumble and shout, so familiar to London ears, attending a fire-engine *en route* are heard, and a party of this brigade, perfectly drilled and disciplined, with engines of the latest pattern and drawn by horses, issues from the gate of the Pompiers’ barrack and tears along the narrow streets of Pera at reckless speed in the direction of the fire.

In a wooden city conflagrations are as easy to kindle as difficult to extinguish, and, numerous as they are, the wonder is that they are not more so. It is, however, the firm persuasion of the vulgar that the innumerable fires which devastate the city are by no means to be attributed to carelessness and the inflammable materials of which the habitations are constructed. It is matter of history that the Janizaries, before their extermination by Mahmoud, instead of at once proclaiming their indignation, at some in-



novation which displeased them, by the extreme measure of upsetting their camp-kettles, were accustomed to give a more gentle indication of their dissatisfaction by setting fire to a whole quarter or so of the town. Public opinion will have it that the same form of protest obtains now. If a great fire has taken place, consuming a few hundred dwellings, and you ask how it may be supposed to have originated, the answer, given in a mysterious tone, will probably be that it was occasioned by such or such an obnoxious order issued by such or such an official. Or you will be assured that the incendiarism came from above instead of from below—that it was not due to popular discontent, but to the enthusiasm of some Turkish Haussmann for metropolitan improvement—in other words, that the fire was deliberately kindled by authority, to provide the opportunity for widening the road or beautifying the locality.



## CHAPTER IV.

Lady Burdett Coutts—The Turkish Compassionate Fund—Start for Adrianople—The lines of Tchikmedjie—Uninteresting country—Absence of timber—A Turkish threshing-floor—Colonization scheme—A way to settle the Eastern Question.

SEEING that any attempt to carry out my hobby of the stretchers corps would be fruitless, Colonel Norton, who was to have joined me in organizing it, and I decided to accept the invitation to accompany him which we received from Colonel Blunt, then on the point of starting on his tour of relief to the refugee Turkish and Bulgarian women and children, who had fled from the war to the villages in the neighbourhood of Phillipopolis. This relief was being provided from the Turkish Compassionate Fund, just inaugurated by that most charitable of living women, Lady Burdett Coutts, and which at



this early date had already reached the respectable sum of 15,000*l*.

On the 19th September we left Stamboul by the six a.m. train for Adrianople. About an hour's slow travelling brought us to the proposed line of defences for Constantinople so admirably selected by Baker Pasha at Tchik-medjie, and if the plans of that talented soldier are faithfully carried out, they will render the capital of the Sultan impregnable on the land side. Indeed the lines of Tchikmedjie are likely some day not very far distant to become as famous as those of Torres Vedras. We were able to get a splendid view of the whole of the left of the position, for the railway, after passing between two of the forts of the proposed lines, takes a turn in front of them, where they join the Tchik-medjie Lake, an inlet of the Sea of Marmora. A double line of forts supporting one another will stretch from the Sea of Marmora to the Black Sea, thus completely fencing off Constantinople from attack on the land side. We could see the sweep of the hills which the half-finished forts already occupied, their natural glacis being made almost inaccessible



by a morass which runs in front of them, almost from sea to sea; but I fear that the dilatoriness of this easy-going race will put off their completion till the Russians are within a few hours' march of Stamboul.

Between this point and Adrianople there was nothing whatever of interest in the features of the country, which nature has endowed with a fertile soil, and which man by his improvidence has done his best to ruin. It made one quite angry to see how completely the timber had been cleared off the face of the land, without a single plantation of young trees having been made to replace it. This no doubt has changed the nature of the climate, and produced the droughts now so generally complained of. The country was quite open as far as the eye could stretch; here and there a little patch of cultivation could be seen like an oasis in the desert, but even this was unfenced and exposed to the herds of wandering cattle and horses. The crop was generally Indian corn. The much larger proportion of the land was, however, uncultivated, and covered with natural grass; it reminded me much of the



rolling prairies of America. Occasionally the line of railway wound through a few acres of stunted brushwood, over which clambered the wild vine. These spots indicated the sites of former woods, which had been felled *en masse* for firewood for the capital, while even the young undergrowth, not having been fenced against the wandering cattle, had been almost entirely eaten off.

I now saw for the first time a Turkish threshing-floor, in a Circassian village through which the train passed. The floor is in the open air, and is constructed by beating clay into a hard, smooth surface; over this the sheaves are spread; and then a sledge drawn by a horse is driven, by a man or boy standing on it, round and round over the sheaves. The bottom of the sledge, which consists of two broad flat bits of wood, is armed with sharp pieces of flint let into it, which serve more or less efficiently to separate the grain from the ear. When the grain has all been roughly worked out by this process, the straw is removed, and the grain swept into a heap to be winnowed. This is done by throwing the grain and refuse



together with a wooden shovel into the air; the grain descends, and the wind is expected to carry away the chaff—a lazy, wasteful process, truly Oriental.

Having been formerly a settler in one of our Australian colonies, I looked upon the country somewhat with the eye of a connoisseur, and could not help picturing to myself how different the scene would have been if some of the younger sons of good English families had settled here—such as I had seen arrive in the colonies with their tidy capital of 5000*l.* or 10,000*l.*, all to be sunk in a year or two there on land which cost 10*l.* an acre to clear of the forest covering it, and took ten years before the stumps of the trees had sufficiently rotted to allow that land to receive a plough. Here lying waste were thousands of acres of magnificent land, to judge from the crops of maize which, wherever cultivated, they produced, with a line of railway to the emporium of the East running through them, and only waiting to be ploughed and sown to bring forth golden crops, and under a good government to yield, with even indifferent farming, a fortune in a



few years to the cultivator. Ah! but under good government! Yes, there is the question! and why should this good government not be forced upon Turkey in the interest of the rest of Europe?

The introduction here of a few protected colonies of Scotch farmers, English younger sons, French and German vine-growers (this is the country for the vine) with moderate capital, would allow the Eastern question to settle itself in ten years, without the expenditure of the millions in men and money which Russia and Turkey are now spending upon it, to say nothing of the millions of armed men which the other Powers are keeping on foot in face of this everlasting Eastern Question. How these colonists would astonish the present slovenly cultivators of the soil, and how, when they began to send their representatives to the Turkish Parliament, they would show that that assembly was not the sham it is expected to prove. But more of this hereafter. I shall presume at the end of these notes to devote a chapter to the ailment of the sick man, and the cure I should venture to prescribe.



We arrived at Adrianople at 9 p.m., having been thirteen hours doing one hundred and fifty miles. I travelled nearly as fast thirty years ago on the old Exeter and Falmouth mail-coach. But travelling here is in keeping with everything else Turkish.



## CHAPTER V.

Adrianople—The Mosque of Sultan Selim—Lady Strangford's hospital—Philippopolis—We purchase our stores—A Bulgarian cheat—A Turkish bed—Greek and Roman coins—The Stafford House mess—National songs—Ibrahim Pacha—"Yarin"—Requisitioning—The Bulgarian araba—Our zaptiehs—Turkish and Bulgarian women—The difference between the races—Gratitude of the Turkish women.

WE stayed two days at Adrianople at the American Hotel, which is only American in name, although I have no fault to find with the fare or the lodging which it offers; indeed this was the last place of decent entertainment we could hope to find on our road between this town and the Danube. During the greater part of our stay at Adrianople I was confined to my room with severe influenza, but I managed to climb to the top of the tall minaret of the Mosque of Selim, 296 steps,



from whence I could get a bird's-eye view of Adrianople. Like all Turkish towns, when seen from a distance it is pretty. This is owing to the large gardens, full of green trees which relieve the white of the houses, the mud and squalor not being visible. From here I got a good view of the fortifications which have been so much talked about. It is the same story here as at Tchikmedjie, "yavach, yavach," "gently, gently." When the Russians were burning stations on the Philippopolis line, the Turks began vigorously to fortify Adrianople; but when the Russians were driven through the Balkans they stopped work, and there now stand some seven half-finished, unarmed forts. Two sides of Adrianople are bounded by the rivers Maritza and Tunja, but as these are fordable in any place during the summer they form no obstacle to the advance of an army.

When, on entering the Mosque of Sultan Selim II., I had to leave my shoes at the door, and walk in my stockings, I thought it would be rather awkward if, when I returned, I found that a Turk had taken a fancy to them, and left his own instead, the cut of which



would not be quite the same as my Jermyn-Street bootmaker's. The mosque was hung inside with thousands of little oil lamps which are lit up at night now, this being the fast of Ramazan—the great Moslem fast—corresponding to our Lent. For the one month's duration of this fast the people are not allowed to eat anything in the daytime, nor to drink a glass of water, nor even smoke a cigarette. In Constantinople you can see men standing in the evening with a cigarette and lucifer match waiting for the sunset gun to fire, when they light up immediately. This is a very bad month for business, as the Turks simply turn night into day, and if you succeed in obtaining an interview at all, you are sure to find them sleepy and stupid. The minarets have three galleries outside, and round these galleries when illuminated a double row of lamps are hung, producing a very pretty effect on a dark night: the minaret itself being invisible, you see only what appear to be wreaths of lights hung in the sky. The galleries are used for the purpose of calling the people to prayer: the priest walks round them, shouting or singing,



north, south, east, and west, in a monotonous wail, "Come to prayer."

My companions paid a visit to Lady Strangford's hospital, and dined in the building with Lady Strangford herself and her lady assistants. The account of this dinner given to me on their return was rather amusing, but speaks for the devotion of the ladies to the cause which they have taken up, the thoughts of their patients being always uppermost in their benevolent minds. The conversation ran thus, "Colonel Blunt, won't you try a little of that cream? Oh dear, there is the Bey coughing, I am afraid his abscess has burst again." Then one lady to another, "Don't you think the bimbashi would enjoy a little of this delicious melon?" "Oh no, dear, he has diarrhoea already."

We left Adrianople at about nine a.m., and arrived at Philippopolis at seven p.m., ten hours doing one hundred miles. We were met at the station by Vice-Consul Calvert, who took us to his comfortable house, where he kept us as his guests for the three days we remained at Philippopolis. Here we purchased the stores of flour, rice, salt, and soap



which we required for distribution. We employed a Bulgarian called Melikoff, who, I may mention, took advantage of his being a British subject to swindle us, for, when we opened the sacks for distribution, we found that the top of each was, according to sample, the best fine flour, but a few inches lower down, we came upon stuff little better than bran. Had this rascal not been a British subject he would not have dared to play this trick upon the poor starving refugees, some of them his own countrywomen, for he knew hanging would have been his lot, and who can say that he did not deserve it? At the corner of every street, both in Adrianople and Philippopolis, were the ghastly gibbets where many of his countrymen, I dare say much more innocent than himself, were being daily strangled.

Philippopolis is built on three rocks or stony hills which rise out of the plain. From Mr. Calvert's house on the top of one of these we had a lovely view of the Balkans about fifty miles distant: the position of the Shipka Pass, marked by a conical hill, was pointed out to us. Here for the first time I slept in a Turkish bed,



the secret of which is that the top sheet, blanket, and counterpane, are either sewn or buttoned together round the edge. The bed is made by folding them at the foot; when you get into it feet foremost, you pull the whole up over you, so that the two sides remain under your body, instead of being tucked under the mattress. When you understand how to get into it, it is very warm and comfortable.

Philippopolis is surrounded for miles by low, marshy ground, which is very insalubrious, producing fever and ague. There are old Roman and Greek remains here. Mr. Calvert showed us a collection of Greek and Roman coins found in the neighbourhood. One old Bulgarian coin had an effigy of Christ on one side, and the king and queen (for Bulgaria was then a kingdom), hand in hand, on the other. Amongst these coins was an old Norman one, which possibly was dropped here by one of our English knights on his way to the Holy Land.

Sept. 22nd.—I have just returned from dining at the Stafford House mess, where we spent a very pleasant but rather noisy evening. When a party of Englishmen meet for a dinner abroad, they are sure to break out in toasts.



Dr. Stretchley sang "The Englishman" splendidly. A French doctor gave us the "Marseillaise." A Greek doctor sang a Greek war-song. After the Queen's health was drunk, we all stood up and sang "God save the Queen;" and as a finish we sang "Auld lang syne," joining hands round the table. We three gendarmes were starting at four o'clock in the morning on our tour of distribution; while some of the doctors were on their way to Plevna.

We had paid a visit to Ibrahim Pasha, the commandant of Philippopolis, to obtain from him the order for the twenty-seven arabas which we should require to carry our stores. We found him most polite and intelligent, speaking French fluently. He was more prompt than Turkish officials generally are, for instead of the usual "yarm" (to-morrow), he at once sent a zaptieh to requisition the arabas. This requisitioning is simply sending to the farmers to order them to attend with their arabas at a certain place for the service of the Government, for which service they ordinarily receive no payment, although sometimes kept from gathering in their crops for weeks



together. The zaptieh is careful not to requisition any Turkish farmers, so that this burden falls entirely upon the Bulgarians.

The araba is a triumph of engineering art, being made entirely of wood without an iron nail or spike in it. They are made by the Bulgarians, costing about one pound sterling, and are well suited to the country roads. With their wheels sometimes oval, and not all of the same size, they go creaking along, drawn by yokes of patient, meek-eyed oxen, or black buffaloes, at the maximum rate of two miles an hour. Ibrahim Pasha also provided us with an escort of four zaptiehs to protect us from the Bashi-Bazouks (empty-headed ones, scapegraces), who are prowling all round the outskirts of the seat of war, seeking whom they may devour. But, for the matter of that, the only difference between the Bashi-Bazouk and the zaptieh is that the latter is a licensed robber, while the former takes French leave—both alike rob the defenceless with impunity. Both are armed with weapons of the seventeenth century, and have their belt stuck full of wonderful flint-lock blunderbuss pistols and long knives. We named them first brigand,



second, third, and fourth brigands; their appearance was most picturesque, and any one of them would have gained a livelihood as first ruffian at one of our transpontine theatres. Their costume consisted of a wonderful pair of stage brigand boots, with enormous spurs, loose petticoat trousers tucked into the boots, a girdle or kummerbund of red worsted, several yards in length, wrapped innumerable times round their loins, which regularly bristled with warlike instruments, long knives, flintlock pistols with bell mouths, a chibouque, and an extra cherry-stick stem for the same; they wore a zouave jacket and waistcoat of green, which looked as if it had been cut out of a damaged billiard cloth, a fez cap with a once bright but now dirty puggeree, which was wound round the head as only an Oriental can arrange it, with one end hanging gracefully down the back. A Winchester repeating rifle was slung across their shoulders, and an old scimitar as sharp as a razor hung by their sides. They were mounted on wiry little horses in perfect condition for work, which, besides themselves, carried all their worldly goods in a pair of



saddle-bags. These little animals were constantly being pressed to their utmost speed by their riders, who with a wild battle-shout would occasionally sweep across an open bit of ground, reining up their horses when at full gallop, and bringing them on their haunches by means of the cruel bit which is used by all Eastern horsemen.

While we were staying at the Consulate, the Consul was beset by refugees applying for relief, Mr. Calvert having a store of blankets and a sum of money from the Compassionate Fund to dispense to the sufferers. Outside his door was a crowd of Turkish and Bulgarian women waiting to be relieved. I was much struck with the marked difference between the races; the Bulgarians cowered and squatted in a corner, and asked for their relief in a whining tone with a cringing manner; the Mahometans, with their tall figures closely veiled, stood erect, looking down, as it seemed, with contempt upon their Bulgarian sisters, and when they stated their cases, they looked the Englishman straight in the face, with an independent and almost haughty mien; but nothing could exceed the out-



burst of passionate yet dignified gratitude with which they received the gifts of the English people, invoking blessings upon our heads from Allah, and upon the heads of our mothers and daughters, frequently kissing the hand of the distributor.



## CHAPTER VI.

We buy horses—The expedition starts—Tumuli—Desolate homes—A Roman Catholic village—The Italian priest—His library—Faithful unto death—The Bulgarian—His frightful atrocities—400 years of oppression—Beerline—Refugees at last—A bereaved wife—Our mission is not understood—Spectres—Orphans—Quinine and chlorodyne in request—I am the hakim—Clothing the naked—Fatma—Mahomet's favourite wife—A gipsy encampment—Carlova—Kalofer—A fearful retribution—Four arabas full of gold—A sulky zaptieh—A Lecture on discipline—Morning and evening prayer on horseback.

At Philippopolis we supplied ourselves with some good sturdy ponies, and having given the arabas a few hours' start under the charge of the 3rd and 4th brigands, we rode away headed by No. 1 and No. 2.

Between Philippopolis and Shipka, the plain is studded with tumuli, no doubt



memorials of hard-fought battles in olden times, but as they are not monuments of the triumph of Islam, the present occupiers of the land are not interested in them, and we could pick up no legends about them. Suleiman Pasha has worked two monster tumuli into the line of earth-works which he is throwing up round his encampment on the plain opposite Shipka, connecting them with a breastwork, and placing artillery on the top. They are in a good position, exactly opposite where the Gabrova road descends into the plain. Several silver and copper coins of Alexander the Great, various Roman Emperors, and of the Bulgarian and Polish kingdoms, were offered to us for sale, dug up in the neighbourhood, showing we were treading on classical ground.

For our first two days' journeying we were unsuccessful in finding objects of charity, as at village after village which we visited, where refugees were reported to be, we found that these had left, and gone to other villages, or returned to their own, which perhaps the tide of war, rolled back by the dogged obstinacy of Suleiman Pasha's troops, had



brought again within the line of Turkish posts: and lucky were those in such cases who found even a roof on their desolated homes. As for doors and windows, those would certainly have been torn off, to make fires to cook the swine's flesh for the hated Giaour.

The second night we pitched our single tent, nine feet square, outside a very pretty Bulgarian village. This place presented a totally different aspect to the other Bulgarian villages we had visited; the houses looked better and cleaner, the inhabitants seemed brighter, and did not move about with that listless air so noticeable in all Bulgarians. The secret was, that this was a Roman Catholic village under a sort of protection of the Italian and French ambassadors. There was here a most intelligent Italian priest from Turin, who took us into his house, showed us his library, and made himself very useful and obliging. He of course was against the Russians. We asked him what he should do if the tide of war again rolled back, and the Turkish army, beaten and reckless, swarmed in upon his peaceful village? He



said his duty was to die for his flock, and he should not shirk it; there he would remain.

It is the fashion just now to run down the wretched Bulgarian, but I pity him from my soul; he has four hundred years of oppression written on his hardened face. He has no doubt lately committed fearful atrocities on defenceless women and children of his oppressor's race, but all sense of manliness has many generations ago been driven out of him. It is the system, which has produced the article, something between man and beast, and not the victim that we must blame. The worm will turn. It is premature to talk of autonomy at once for such a spiritless lot; it will take a generation or two before by freedom they have been educated up to the level of men. One Bulgarian is exactly like another, the same dull, listless way with all of them. Physically they are a fine race of men, and I have seen some of their women handsome, but most even of these wear a brutalized expression. The men are all dressed exactly alike, with the brown sheepskin skull-cap, the brown undyed suit of homespun woollen clothes.



The third day of our journey, September 26th, we came to a large village, Beerkine, which had perhaps 350 refugees in it; we pitched our tent in the farmyard of a Bulgarian house, in which house we had our cooking done. The poor woman of it was in bitter trouble, for every now and then she went away to the corner to cry. On my asking what was the matter, I was told that her husband had been taken by the authorities, and was in prison in Philippopolis. He was probably at that moment hanging from one of the gibbets we had seen; for it is a short shrift they get; and to be suspected, I fancy, is to be condemned. The next morning we started on our work of charity. We had sent for the head man of the village to point out to us the houses in which were refugees, and with four arabas at a time we visited each house. At first our mission was not understood, but after a while we found standing at each gateway the half-starved, half-clothed spectres of women, who, having no *yashmak* (veil) left, stood with their back turned to us, the *feregee* (cloak), if they possessed one, thrown



over the face, and answered the questions put to them.

“How many were there in family?”

“There had been nine, but two had died.”

“What was the husband?”

“Dead, or a soldier with Suleiman Pasha, did not know whether dead or alive.”

Many of these women had double families under their charge, having even in their own distress taken pity on the motherless, fatherless children of some who had fallen victims to the war. Many little boys were presented to us, without a living relation left to them in the world. In every house there was sickness; and in a few hours a whole bottle of quinine, and another of chlorodyne was exhausted in administering to their ailments. Fever and ague, and diarrhoea or dysentery, seemed to be the chief complaints from which they suffered. Little children, with not many hours to live, were brought to us; and at last, at every house, as our errand got to be known, we found some one waiting with a bowl of water, into which I dropped either quinine or chlorodyne, with instructions as to doses, &c. I was perforce the *hakim* of the



party; and many a kiss had I pressed upon my hand from the grateful lips of some mother, who thought my simple remedies were sure to save the life of her dying child. Colonel Charles Grantley Norton was to be seen during this, standing in one of the arabas shovelling out wooden scoops full of flour, covered with it like a miller, and working like a slave.

“Katch Kissi?—How many people?”

“Five.”

“Here you are—twenty okes of flour, four okes to each” (the oke is two pounds and three-quarters English).

This took us till the afternoon, when we went round visiting each house, and taking down the names of those who wanted clothing, which most did. It was astonishing to see the number of Fatmas, we counted up to twelve; when we arrived at Fatma No. 12, we began to christen them Mary Fatma, and so on. Fatma was the name of the favourite wife of the Prophet, a fact which may account for its frequency, as the circumstance of it having been the name of the mother of Christ, may for the popularity of Mary in Christian



countries. After this we returned to our tent, and made up the various parcels, which we took out and distributed to the various Fatmas, having the name written on each parcel. This occupied a whole hard day.

The following morning we found the top of the Balkans covered with snow ; we had had rain in the night, which had been snow in the Balkans. We visited village after village, where we went through the same distribution, with more or less fever and ague in each. In one place we found several hundred refugees encamped by the roadside under some poplar trees ; there was quite a little village of arabas, which had been covered over gipsy-tent fashion, and their owners and their families were living in them. A few old men accompanied them, but most of the families were composed of women and children alone.

In distributing relief we commonly explained that the gift was not ours, but that of a number of English people, some rich, some very poor, headed by one noble and most charitable lady, who had originated this Fund for the succour of her fellow-creatures suffering in Turkey, and was still labouring



earnestly to extend it. And many more times than once our explanation was followed by some such question as :—

“What is the name of the good English lady, who can feel so for poor Osmanlis, whom she has never seen?”

“Lady Burdett Coutts.”

“Would the Effendi repeat the name again, so that we may remember it when we pray to Allah?”

A few days of this work brought us in sight of what had been the lovely and thriving town of Carlova, lying close in under the Balkans; now only a few houses were standing. We did not stop there, as the few people it could shelter had been relieved before. We were now in the heart of the ravaged district, and passed through what had been the Bulgarian town of Kalofer. Here the Bulgarians had taken up arms against the Turks, and killed perhaps a hundred soldiers: a terrible retribution was exacted for this, for I never saw anything more thoroughly destroyed than Kalofer. There was not a house, scarcely a wall, standing; the trees in the gardens had been burnt, and the place looked charred



and wretched. It had been a town of 10,000 inhabitants; there was not one now. A few cats prowled about the ruins, not seeming to understand it, and several Bashi-Bazouks were if possible making more of a ruin of the place by hunting for treasure. One of our zaptiehs told us that an old Bulgarian had been killed there, who was known to have amassed four arabas full of gold, and they could not find where he had buried it. No surer way of utterly destroying a town could be found than propagating such a story in a neighbourhood infested with Bashi-Bazouks, for they will not leave one stone on another till they find the treasure, if it exists.

The morning after leaving Carlova we observed that the zaptieh whom we had named brigand No. 3, instead of being in front with the train of arabas, was following us at some little distance. We called No. 1, who was the Onbashee (Corporal) of the party to us, and asked if the man was unwell. It turned out that he was only suffering from a fit of the sulks, brought on by jealousy. He thought the post of bodyguard to the three English pashas, as these men styled us, was a more



honourable one than that of escort to the provision waggons; and when the Onbashee had refused to indulge his fancy, had taken this means of making his grievance known to us. We had him brought before us, and gave him a lecture upon discipline, which so forcibly appealed to his reason, that he immediately and cheerfully resumed his place with the arabas. The next day, to reward him for his readiness to acknowledge his fault, we had him transferred to the post he coveted. The religion of these men was a grand feature in their character; every day, morning and evening, they would ride ahead some hundred yards or so, and as they sat their horses, offer up their song of praise to Allah, which, morally, was more than harmonious. We took care never to disturb them in these devotions, and we always knew when they were at an end, by the way the man would dash his spurs into his horse, and give vent to his feelings in a gallop across the plain.

An English congregation might learn a lesson in reverence from the childlike devotion of the followers of Mahomet. I have often been struck with the utter absorption



of a Turk in the act of worship. The man will spread his carpet, for this purpose, on the deck of a steamer, for instance, amidst the crew busy in navigating the ship, and regardless of lookers-on; but, lost to all thoughts of the outer world, give himself up to the worship of his Creator.

I had a selfish reason to regret that Kalofer was in ruins. My horse had cast a shoe, and was already going very lame. There was no blacksmith nearer than Kutchuk Ova, the village where we intended to halt for the night.

The Turkish horseshoe is a thin plate of iron which covers the whole of the foot, having a small hole about the size of a shilling in the centre. From want of exposure the frog of the foot gets very delicate, and this causes a horse to go lame almost directly he loses a shoe. A Turkish blacksmith does not need his forge to shoe a horse, as the plates are hammered cold, and cut into shape with a cold chisel. One advantage of this is, that instead of having to send your horse to the blacksmith, you can order him to wait upon your horse in his own stable.



## CHAPTER VII.

Sickening sights—The ravages of war—Kutchuk Ova—  
A dressing-shed—We meet a train of wounded—  
Hungarian doctors—Shipka in the distance—An  
artillery duel—Kesanlik—A ruined town—We ride  
to Shipka—Captain Fyfe, British commissioner with  
the Shipka army—Describes the military position—  
A gallant Campbell who led the storming party  
when Fort Nicholas was taken—Close quarters—An  
invitation to breakfast—The Turkish battalions shout  
for their Padishah.

LEAVING Kalofer, we found both sides of the  
road outside strewn with unburied bodies, to  
judge by the clothing mostly those of women,  
fugitives from the fate of the town. Amongst  
these were prowling horrid dogs, sleek and  
fat on their human nourishment. For miles  
our road lay through a lovely valley. A  
month before the hills on both sides had been  
studded with pretty villages; the only trace  
of them now was where we saw the leaves of



the trees had turned red, from the fire which had consumed the houses they had sheltered. That night we spent at Kutchuk Ova (little plain), where a shed was in course of erection for a dressing-place for the wounded, being erected by orders of an English *hakim*, who was going to live there. We were now nearing Shipka. We could hear artillery fire. The next morning we met a train of wounded, in charge of two Hungarian doctors, on the way to Philippopolis, who stopped and chatted with us. We gave them the contents of our brandy-flasks, which they seemed to relish very much, saying they had not tasted anything of the sort for weeks. Kesanlik they described as destroyed, except a few large houses, which had been secured for hospitals. Before reaching Kesanlik that afternoon, we left a few miles to our left the famous Shipka Pass, where an artillery duel was then going on. Fort Nicholas could be plainly distinguished.

Kesanlik we found pretty much as described. It was said to have had formerly a population of 20,000. In some places whole districts were burnt; in others they were only



gutted, every bit of wood having been taken for firewood. There were districts, though, still inhabited by refugees, and amongst these we found more sickness than in the villages. There did not, in fact, seem to be a healthy person amongst them. Their pale, wan faces told you this without asking. Here I served out quinine all round, counting heads only, until our stock, though it had been considerable, was exhausted. In the afternoon we rode over to Shipka, where we found Captain Fyfe, our military attaché, in his tent. His brother attaché, poor young Layard of the Engineers, nephew of the Ambassador at Stamboul, had died a few days before of typhoid fever, and was buried in the churchyard of the Greek church, close to our encampment. Colonel Norton took a sketch of his grave, thinking it might be acceptable to his uncle. Captain Fyfe entertained us in his tent with brandy and water, and an account of things at Shipka. He described the positions there with a teacup; the Turks were all round the top of the cup, and the Russians at the bottom, and why the former had failed to reap the fruits of their



victory he could not understand. They had lost opportunity after opportunity. In the next tent was a gallant young Scotchman, Campbell by name, who had joined the Turkish army. He had volunteered for the last attack on Fort Nicholas, and had led the only party which had effected a lodgment. This was the time (Sept. 17th) when Shipka was reported as taken. He held his position there for some hours, but the two flanking parties failed to advance to his support, and the Russians at last brought up their reserves from their camp on the Gabrova road and drove them out. Campbell received the contents of a revolver in the sleeve of his coat, the charges passing between his arm and his body at close quarters. For this service he received his promotion to the rank of Bimbashi, commander of a battalion. He had previously seen some hard fighting in his day, and for fighting he seemed to have an unconquerable thirst. He had been desperately wounded under Von Tempsky in the New Zealand war, and had afterwards gone through a variety of adventures in Ashantee. Having met him in Pera, I renewed my acquaintance,



and Colonel Norton and myself accepted an invitation to breakfast with him next morning, and afterwards visited the most advanced position held by the Turks at Shipka. As we were going to mount our horses to return, our ears were greeted with a most terrific shout, and then another, and another. This was the shout which the Turkish regiments send up every night at sunset for their Padishah. They were fallen in on their parades, and after giving the shout, a battalion at a time, they were dismissed. A British cheer was nothing to it. I could fancy the awe these fellows would inspire in the Russian troops when they advanced to the charge, as they have done more than once in this war, to the shout of "Allah ! Ul Allah !"



## CHAPTER VIII.

A camp breakfast—Campbell's road—Dragging guns up the Balkans—Our ascent of the Balkans—Beautiful view—The Turkish batteries—Suleiman Pasha's blunders—The advanced trench—Effect of the Russian fire—Want of engineering skill shown by the Turks—The soldiers' huts—The commander of the advanced posts—He invites us into his underground dwelling, and gives us coffee—We descend to the plain, and lunch with the correspondents of the *Morning Post* and *Telegraph*—Fortnum and Mason's plum-pudding—Mr. Cook's tourist to Shipka—We are benighted—We stow away like sardines in a tin—Plum groves—Damson cheese—A bitter satire.

THE next morning at nine o'clock we presented ourselves at Campbell's tent, where we found a nice little camp breakfast ready for us. Colonel Blunt had arranged to do the distribution alone that day, and was to work up close to Shipka, where we were to meet him, in the afternoon, at a village where



three of the Stafford House doctors, Hume, Attwood, and Sandwith, were located. After breakfast Colonel Norton, Campbell, Mr. Wasborough, the correspondent of the *Morning Post* and also of the *Times* (since Captain Gambier had been ordered away by Suleiman Pasha), and myself started to ride up to Shipka by a road which Campbell had cut in the mountains (and which still goes by the name of Campbell's Road), with 1500 men, leading to the Turkish left attack. Up this road the guns had been dragged by parties of men, two hundred to a gun. When we had gone a little way, we turned round to look at the lovely view behind us. We could see the whole of the Shipka plain surrounded by the Balkans, and giving glimpses of a lower range of hills beyond; while at our feet lay, like a patch-work quilt, little patches of cultivation, contrasting with one another in tint—a beautiful little plain rich in soil. When we got to the summit of the first range we came to beech woods, through which the path wound, sometimes exposed to the fire of the Russian batteries, at others on the reverse side of the hill. The top of



the third and highest range is covered with short grass, and looked as if it had been used as a sheep-walk. There were Turkish batteries, some with, some without guns, and the turf was ploughed up by the splinters of the Russian shells which covered the ground all round. Turning round the side of the hill, we came upon a full view of the Bulgarian plains, the town of Gabrova being plainly visible about ten miles distant. We then saw the force of Captain Fyfe's argument—the two Turkish attacks, right and left of it, had completely enveloped Fort Nicholas, which they commanded. The positions could be better compared to a horse-shoe; the Turkish representing the shoe, and Fort Nicholas, (the only point still held by the Russians,) the inside where the frog would come. The Turks only required to complete the circle, and the Russians were surrounded. Why they did not do so, I don't suppose they knew themselves; there was nothing to prevent it. We at once set down Suleiman Pasha as a perverse and obstinate blunderer, who quite unnecessarily sacrificed his men's lives, hurling them at an impregnable



position, which in a week could be starved out for want of water. We now left our horses, and walked through beech woods to the most advanced trench, 200 yards from the Russian rifle-pits; there the branches had been cut off the trees by the Russian fire, which had left them gaunt sticks.

We could not help being struck by the want of engineering skill shown by the Turks. Their batteries seemed to be dropped down in chance places, seldom luckily chosen, and were erected without traverses or bomb-proof magazines. The men were occupied in hutting themselves, digging holes about two feet deep, and throwing a roof over them composed of the branches of trees covered over with mud, which indeed was very plentiful. These huts were built in the batteries where the traverses should have been; and I can fancy what casualties there will be by-and-by, if the Russians drop a few shells into the batteries at night, when the huts are crowded with sleeping soldiers.

I was a little surprised to find the unburied bodies of the Russians, killed in their last attempt to retake this important height, lying



unburied amidst the Turkish huts. A great many were decapitated, and my pony nearly put his foot on one head which had been preserved fresh in the pure mountain air, and looked quite lifelike.

At the advanced post we were welcomed by the officer in command, who invited us to crawl into his underground dwelling, in which there was just room for five of us to lie, but where our host entertained us with some cups of delicious coffee. After a chat of half an hour, which consisted mostly in compliments from both sides, we considered we had done Shipka thoroughly; and when we had cut a stick each, under fire, to take away as a trophy and memento, began to descend the hill.

We had found it quite cold and cutting on the north side of the Balkans, but when we got round to the south side it was quite warm—an absolutely different climate—like passing from the cold to the hot room in the Turkish baths. The Bulgarians say that neither Russians nor Turks will be able to maintain their positions on account of the cold in the winter.

On our descent Mr. Wasborough invited



us all to luncheon with him, in the village next to the one in which we were to meet Colonel Blunt, where he and Mr. Leader, the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, lived. Here we were entertained with all sorts of good things from Fortnum and Mason, Christmas plum pudding amongst others. We were presently joined by Colonel Blunt and the three doctors, who had heard of our whereabouts. Such a meeting of Englishmen does not often occur in these parts, and we spent a very pleasant hour or two in one another's society.

I forgot to mention that on my way down I took a good look at the Shipka ranges, and discovered a gorge, on which the Turkish left rested, running almost through the mountains, which should have been selected as the line for the pass, instead of that one over the mountains now used. By this gorge a road might have been taken almost without a rise, by making a short tunnel of at the most half a mile through a hill, which closes the north end of it, to the Bulgarian plains. No doubt some day a line of railway will be constructed through



this gorge; Mr. Cook's tourists will here descend at the Saint Nicholas station, and mount the hill to their right to see the celebrated position of that name, before which so many of Turkey's bravest soldiers went down. Such a line would be more cheaply constructed than any other having in view the connexion of the Turkish with the European system of railways. After completing the short tunnel spoken of, it would present no engineering difficulties till you come to the Danube. It would be an extension from the Yamboli branch breaking off at Karabunar, from thence to Eski Zaghra, Kezanlik, Shipka, Gabrova, Tirnova (whence a branch to Loftcha, Plevna, and Nicopolis for the special benefit of Mr. Cook's tourists) from Tirnova to Sistova, where a tubular bridge across the Danube, at the spot now occupied by the bridge of boats, would connect it with the branch line now being constructed by the Russians to Simnitza. When the terms of peace come to be talked of, Russia, if she is wise, will make the completion of this line by Turkey one of the stipulations.



Saying good-bye to Campbell, Wasborough, and Leader, we started under the convoy of Drs. Attwood and Sandwith, to find our way back to our camp at Kesanlik; but night coming on, these gentlemen got off the track which does duty as a roadway, and the party were thrown on my New Zealand experiences of the bush to find their way home. I struck for the main road, which we should know when we came to it from its being macadamized. This of course took us into Kesanlik. It was then pouring with rain, and to send the two doctors back alone on a pitch-dark night, for a ride of six miles, would have been very poor hospitality. We had nothing to offer but a camp supper of preserved meats and a share of our tent, nine feet square; however, we made the best of it, and, converting the whole floor of the tent into a large bed, we managed to stow away like sardines in a tin, the two outsiders, however, getting one side somewhat wet from the rain.

The next morning we started for Eski Zaghra, our friends seeing us through the town of Kesanlik, and wishing us "God speed." Kesanlik must have been a very



pretty town before it was ruined, for here the streets were wider, and beautiful springs of clear water had been converted into fountains at the corner of every street. These are mostly destroyed now, the water flooding the streets. Each house in the suburbs had its garden full of fruit-trees. The ground under the plum-trees, of which there are groves, was literally black with the fruit which had fallen from them, there being no one to pick it up.

The owners used to prepare a sort of damson cheese with the lees of these plums, after they had been crushed to produce a delicious beverage. This cheese is made by spreading the lees on flat boards, and leaving it to harden; when quite hard it is rolled off, and forms an article of food.

The houses were here all marked with a cross cut out in white paper, and stuck on the doors. I don't know whether this was done by the Bulgarians after the Russians had driven out the Turks, but it probably was. One house had the imperial arms of Russia painted upon it, and was perhaps intended for the Grand Duke's occupation.



In several of the small houses I saw pictures from our *Illustrated London News* and *Graphic* pasted on the walls. There was also the framework of a triumphal arch thrown across the main street, supposed to have been erected by the Bulgarian inhabitants for the Grand Duke's arrival, but as the Russians were driven out before it was finished, it was decorated instead, as a bitter satire, with the bodies of Bulgarian rebels who were hung from it.



## CHAPTER IX.

We leave Kesanlik—The Eski Zaghra pass—Victims of the war—Eski Zaghra—The konak—A polite caimacam—A Turkish dinner of five courses—The caimacam's tale of woe—100 villages burnt—The caimacam escorts us round the ruins of the town—Horrible sights—A hanging Bulgarian—Should children see such sights?—Sick of horrors—Crops rotting on the stem—The cultivation of the vine—Turkey a wine-growing country.

HAVING now parted with all our supplies—except twenty sacks of flour which were too bad for distribution, and which we sent back under charge of a zaptieh to Philippopolis with the empty arabas—we could travel with less impediment, and determined that night to push as far as Eski Zaghra. We had some miles of plain to cross before we came to the low range of hills before mentioned, through which there was a pass. This pass we found literally strewn with bodies of dead Bul-



garians, amongst them a great many women. Some of these had not been disturbed by the dogs, and it was evident from the position of the dress what had been their fate before death. These poor creatures must have been attempting to fly with the Russian army when, beaten out of Eski Zaghra, it made good its retreat through this pass.

At Eski Zaghra we were lodged in the *konak*, which corresponds to our town-hall. This one had been an old imperial palace, and was luckily one of the few houses which were not destroyed. The caimacam lived in it, as well as held his court there. This gentleman was exceedingly polite—wanted to turn out of his bedroom for us, and, when we would not hear of that, made us up beds on the divans in the room used for the court. Here he sat and chatted with us until his servant brought us a dinner of five courses from his own kitchen, when he retired. He was the most intelligent man of his class we had met, was an advocate for dealing leniently with the Bulgarians, had himself encouraged many of those who had run away to the mountains to return, and had then



found work for them. It is a pity Turkey has not many more such officials. He gave us the history of his district, which he had only a week or two before taken over. He said out of the one hundred and one villages which it contained one only had not been burnt; that in it (the district) 15,000 people had been killed. I presume this included the losses of Suleiman Pasha's army. He told us that now the Government were sending all those Bulgarians who were convicted of outrages by the courts of Philippopolis and Adrianople, to be hung in the towns or villages where they had committed their crimes. He had then a man under sentence of death, who had confessed to having murdered fourteen Turkish women and six men. He said that he had had a party for days burying the dead, and there were still hundreds unburied.

We had seen, as we were entering the town, an open space of about an acre literally covered with *débris* of clothing. This area was said to have been once almost as completely covered with corpses, since buried.

Next morning the caimacam mounted his



horse, and, with an escort of cavalry, conducted us over the town. For more than an hour we rode through its deserted streets. It was literally a city of the dead; and the melancholy cooing of the turtle-doves, which frequent every Turkish town, was quite in harmony with our thoughts. As we rode along its silent streets a horrible sight every now and then met our view, whether it was a couple of dogs quarrelling for the possession of a human leg, or whether a heap of decaying corpses. In some districts which had not been visited by the burying party, nearly every house had a corpse or two, either inside or lying at the door. Turning suddenly the corner of a street, we came upon the body of the man, whom the caimacam had mentioned to us the night before, swinging by a bit of whipcord from a gallows, with the usual placard pinned on his breast, setting forth his crime. Here there was no crowd of women and children to look on as in the populated towns, and so much the better, for it must have a very bad moral effect on little children, to be witnesses day after day to such scenes; and, instead of allowing the feeling against the



Bulgarians to die out, it plants it stronger than ever in the hearts of the rising generation of young Turks; and for the terrorizing effect it can have upon would-be criminals, I don't think it is worth it. This last sight was enough for us. We began to grow sick of horrors, to feel a dead weight on our hearts; so we begged the caimacam to show us the nearest road to Tchirpan. This he did, according to Turkish etiquette accompanying us a short distance on our journey, until we begged him not to devote to us any more of his precious time. He then bade us adieu, and with his escort returned to his konak, while we with ours wended our way through vineyards and corn-fields, feeling a relief in the fresh country air from the oppression of the town and its horrors.

For miles and miles we rode through vineyards and corn-fields, where not a grape had been plucked or a straw cut. There was no population left to cut it, and there it was dropping from the stem. Turkey is naturally a magnificent wine-growing country; but the right sort of grape has not been introduced here. The grape most grown is a



small black one, which only produces a coarse black wine. I feel quite sure, from some white wine which I tasted, that if the right vine were introduced, Turkey would in time produce wines similar to the German hocks. I have also tasted a white wine, made from selected grapes, which resembles a dry sherry, possessing a large amount of natural alcohol.

The only people we passed on the road between Eski Zaghra and Sophia were a party of Bulgarians under charge of escort, chained together in gangs of four, with iron collars round their necks, wending briskly to their doom.

We spent the night in a small village near Tchirpan, and arrived at Philippopolis the next day, October 8th, where we again were kindly entertained by Mr. Calvert.



## CHAPTER X.

Dr. Sarell—No. 5 ambulance of the “Red Crescent”—  
Baron Mundy—I join the Red Crescent—The Turks  
neglect their wounded—The Philippopolis hospital—  
The wounded lying on the floor—Still in their  
uniform—We start for Tatar Bazardjik—Our ambu-  
lance waggons—I remain behind—M. Baptiste—A  
major in the navy—Yeni Keui—A Turkish britzka—  
Bumps on the head—The passage of the Balkans—  
Ugly position—In the lion’s den—Bread and salt.

WE found stopping also at the consulate Dr. Sarell, a well-known medical practitioner of Pera, whom I had met there when he was attending Baker Pasha. He was now on his way to Plevna, in charge of an ambulance of the *Croissant Rouge*, and had with him some nine or ten English surgeons just arrived from England: Drs. MacKellar, Pinkerton, and Macpherson, sent out by Lord Blantyre; Dr. Vachell, Fitzpatrick, Ruddock, and King (an American), sent out by the Stafford House



Committee ; Dr. Manoorie, sent out by a French society ; and three young men, Douglas, Denton, and Jennings, who had passed all but their last examination for surgeons, had gone through the course at the hospitals of St. Thomas and St. George's, but were only engaged as dressers, although competent to perform operations. The Stafford House party had been transferred to the *Croissant Rouge*. Dr. Sarell had engaged besides some ten or twelve assistants, as treasurer, secretary, interpreters, storekeepers, &c. There was also a Turk attached, Munir Bey, ostensibly as Turkish secretary, but understood to be a spy upon the ambulance.

This ambulance was under the special patronage of the Sultan, who was supposed to take a great interest in it. It had been organized by Baron Mundy, the well-known father of the ambulance system,—a man who has seen thirteen campaigns, and is said to have more decorations than any man in Europe—but Turkish suspicion had prevented his carrying out his intention of starting with it himself, and he was detained at Constantinople, almost at the last moment, by order



of the Sultan. He had therefore handed over his charge to Dr. Sarell, leaving him to appoint his own executive officers and to make the few purchases still required to complete the equipment. A great deal was said of what this ambulance was going to do, and certainly, judging from the funds at the command of the society, great things might justly have been expected of it. It was a field ambulance, the first of the kind employed on the side of the Turks. Dr. Sarell had with him one hundred stretchers of the most approved pattern, and intended to organize a corps of *brancardiers*. I found that he had adopted my ideas, which doubtless he had heard of from Baron Mundy, to whom Mr. Barrington Kennett had introduced me on his first arrival at Constantinople. Dr. Sarell asked me to join him as *chef de brancardiers*, offering to pay all my expenses if I would give my services free. I was only too pleased, not only to have an opportunity of seeing Plevna, but also to have a prospect of carrying out my hobby. I was rather anxious too to see how this would be allowed to work. It was possible



that this ambulance, being under the special patronage of the Sultan, might have power to do as it pleased; but the authorities at Stamboul had shown so much skill in fencing with my proposition that I doubted much whether it was their intention to allow any such scheme to be fairly carried out.

To this may be added the fact, that, in European Turkey at any rate, the English surgeons have cleverly, but systematically, been kept from going to the front, where they have been always eager to go. The funds of the different societies have been utilized in establishing transport for the wounded between the first line of hospitals (if such a thing could be said to exist in the chaos of the Turkish Medical Service) and the nearest railway station. Be the reasons what they may, the English doctors, not in the Turkish service, have never had the opportunity of taking cases in hand from the first, but have been employed in a rear line in performing operations which would have been safe if taken in time, but of which the success has been rendered doubtful by the length of time the patient has been neglected, and the



consequent loss of the strength required to enable him to bear up against the operation.

The Turks have shown every readiness to avail themselves of the medical stores and comforts provided by English money ; but either the jealousy of Turkish so-called surgeons, whose incompetency is proverbial, or the studied design of the Government, has prevented the services of the valuable men sent out from being turned to their full account. I have actually heard it given as a reason for this, that the Government are afraid of the enormous accumulation of maimed and crippled soldiers which this murderous war would throw upon the country, and prefer that their lives should not be saved to encumber an already bankrupt state. But I can hardly believe such an inhuman policy possible. The fact, however, remains, and can be testified to by every English surgeon out there, that Turkey has not done as much for her wounded as she had it placed in her power to do by the liberal subscriptions which have poured in from other countries, notably from England.

After paying a visit to the hospitals at Philippopolis, where we found things in a



fearful state, the wounded lying huddled together on the floor with the uniforms, in which they had been wounded a fortnight before, still upon them, we started on the 9th October, by the 5.30 p.m. train, for Tatar Bazardjik, arriving at 7.30 p.m. Here we stopped three days, buying horses and making preparations for the march, which must now be continued on horseback or in country vehicles.

In these few days I was sorry to learn that there was a want of that unanimity amongst the members of the ambulance which is necessary to carry out successfully any co-operative undertaking. There were two antagonistic parties—the medical and the executive. The latter consisted of a crowd of useless Levantines: there was not one practical man amongst them, not one who had any experience of the kind required, or who knew anything of the country or the mode of travelling in Turkey. Between these men and the English surgeons a bad feeling grew up at once. The latter, seeing that they were considered of comparatively no consequence, that they were always spoken of by



Dr. Sarell somewhat contemptuously as "the Englishmen," and that they were not informed of any of his plans, were naturally a little sore. The Levantines, who were taken more into Dr. Sarell's confidence, were not slow to parade before the Englishmen their superior importance.

Not wishing to be mixed up in any unpleasantness which might arise, I remained one day behind at Tatar Bazardjik, intending to come on with a party of the Stafford House Society, which, under charge of Mr. Cullen, was also going to Sophia. And glad I was that I did so, for Mr. Cullen was an old campaigner, had been many years in Turkey, and understood the country and the ways of the people well. He had with him a most valuable dragoman, Monsieur Baptiste, whose nationality was unknown; he could speak any language more or less. This man was quite a character; he told us he had been a major in the Egyptian navy, in which he had served fifteen years, and had left it because his temper interfered with his promotion. But his talents for foraging were wonderful, and we lived like fighting cocks the whole of



our journey from Tatar Bazardjik to Sophia. Dr. Macpherson, who had been left behind at Philippopolis, joined us at Bazardjik after the departure of the ambulance.

We left Tatar Bazardjik at mid-day, 12th October, with an escort of two zaptiehs, and at sunset reached Yeni Keui, at the foot of the first range of Balkans, where it is traversed by what is still called Trajan's pass. Here we found drawn up at the door of the khan one of the ambulance waggons, which had broken down at the first stage of the journey.

Dr. Sarell had in fact been considerably cheated by the Pera tradesmen. The saddlery he had bought, and paid well for, turned out the commonest rubbish. It was found that four ambulance waggons, fitted up for carrying three stretchers each on elastic springs, or twelve persons seated, would not turn : the fore wheels, being the same size as the hind, gave the axle no play, and with these it was highly improbable that the winding ascent and descent of the Balkans could be made.

The people of the khan gave us a dismal



account of the cavalcade. They had started thence, tired and hungry, the night before at nine o'clock with bullocks replacing the horses in the other three ambulance waggon, having left one horse dead with the broken-down waggon.

After a few minutes for refreshments we set out to ascend the mountain, Dr. Macpherson and myself, being mounted, rode on ahead. The others were in one britzka, and the baggage and servants in the other.

Do not let it be supposed that the aforesaid britzka of Turkey bears any resemblance to the elegant equipages of that name to be seen any day during the season in Hyde Park. Far from it, this is simply a miniature covered waggon, in which you are supposed to sit cross-legged on a mat. If you prefer sitting English fashion, you extemporize a seat of wraps, or of whatever available luggage you may have, and then your head touches the roof, which is studded all over with china headed nails, apparently put there expressly to raise mole-hills on your head; for at every jump—it is more than a jolt—which the conveyance gives, and these occur every minute



on such awful roads, your head comes violently in contact with one or more of the nails.

Shortly after leaving Yeni Keui it became dark, and began to rain, or rather hail, and to blow right in our teeth. Our destination was Palanka, said to be an hour and a half further on, where we intended to spend the night. Distance is measured by hours in Turkey; an hour is about four miles. We had therefore, we calculated, six miles to go.

About half an hour after leaving Yeni Keui we reached some very pretty wooden huts, which I learned afterwards had been erected by Lady Strangford for the homeless Bulgarians, the victims of the "atrocities," the ostensible cause of the present war.

It now got so dark that I could only just see my horse's ears, and the cold wind and hail drove into my face quite painfully. I had lost sight of my companion, Dr. Macpherson, whose horse, being a slower walker, could not keep up with mine. My animal felt the bitterness of the driving hail so much that, every time I stopped, he immediately turned his tail towards it, and it



was with some difficulty I could get him to resume his journey.

After riding some time I began to feel that I was in rather an ugly position, alone in bitter weather, all my lower extremities soaking, on a strange mountain road, without a zaptieh to protect me from Bashi-Bazouks, with which gentry I knew that part to be infested, as a doctor of another ambulance had been stopped and robbed by them a few days before on that very road.

The road was cut in the side of the hill, and I could feel that my horse, to whom I gave the rein, was keeping on the outside edge of it, putting his feet down within an inch or two of precipices, perhaps hundreds of feet in depth.

However, there was nothing for it but to go on, and as we had left Yeni Keui two hours, and had been told that Palanka was only an hour and a half, I thought I could not be very far from it, since my horse had been walking quite three miles an hour.

At this point, just as I was turning round a corner, having a cliff above me on the right, and a precipice below me on the left, my horse



gave a sudden spring from one side of the road to the other, and then stood trembling. Luckily his jump had been *from* the edge to the wall on my right. Now, thought I, my time is come : the next thing will be “your money or your life” in Turkish ; and having no revolver or weapon of any sort, and a gallop along that fearful road in the pitch darkness being certain death, I did not purpose either a fight or a flight for my few liras, but was quite prepared to hand them over. I found out afterwards, from the description I could give of the spot, that this must have been where Ambulance Waggon No. 2, in attempting to turn the sharp corner, had rolled over the precipice. My horse had probably been frightened at the smell of fresh blood.

After a second or two my steed began cautiously to move on ; and presently I caught sight of a light a few hundred yards ahead. I now waited for my companion to come up, who joined me in a quarter of an hour, being evidently quite as miserable as myself.

When we reached the light, which was in a gorge, through which the road here wound, we found it was the camp-fire of some arabas,



the drivers of which were huddled round it, to keep as much warmth in themselves as they could on such a bitter night.

These men told us that we were still one hour from Palanka. This was not cheering, but still we kept on in the same driving hail, going over wooden bridges, out of which we felt certain from experience that several planks would be missing; but leaving pace and direction entirely to our horses, who had slackened almost to a crawl, so cautiously did they feel their way, we proceeded for two hours more without a sign of a house, and began to think we must have passed Palanka in the dark. At last we heard ahead of us the barking of dogs, and in about a quarter of an hour came to a village, a little off the road, where my horse walked straight into a yard, and I could see the faint glimmer of a light at some distance.

On my shouting the door of a cabin was thrown open, and a light fell on my face. I found that the inhabitant could not talk Turkish, and I could not make him understand that we wanted a night's lodging; so after abusing him for a stupid Bulgarian, I



rode on to another light. Here the door was no sooner opened than it was instantly slammed in our faces.

At the third house we succeeded in finding a man who could talk Turkish, who told me, on my asking whether this was Palanka, that it was not, but a Circassian village. We had, then, walked into the lion's den.

My eyes, now accustomed to the light, made out the outline of this last man's figure, which was in the shadow a yard from me. I saw that he held a gun in his hand, with the muzzle pointed towards me.

However, there was nothing for it but to wear a bold face, and throw ourselves upon his hospitality. This, after some hesitation, he gave us, stabling our horses, and giving them some hay, and taking us into his cabin, where he spread a rush mat for us on the mud floor.

The cabin was divided into two compartments by a wall, in which there was a little doorway, just big enough for a child of two years old to walk through without bending its head. On the other side of this partition we heard a woman's voice scolding her hus-



band in the Circassian tongue. Whether right or not in our surmise, we concluded that she was giving directions to him for the comfort of their guests, but as all the comfort at first produced was a rush mat and a good wood fire, her exhortations did not promise to have much effect.

After about an hour, however, our friend introduced, from beyond the small door, some hot corncakes and fresh milk, which were most acceptable ; yet I could not help thinking of the delicious supper which I knew M. Baptiste would have had ready for us at Palanka, which place, by the bye, our host told us, we had left three hours behind us. It was in fact none other than the collection of wooden houses spoken of before as erected by Lady Strangford. We had in reality passed it half an hour after leaving Yeni Keui. Such is the glorious uncertainty of distance in this primitive country.

When our friend produced his cake and milk, I knew that we were safe ; for such is the hospitality of these Circassians, that if they have once allowed you to break bread in their houses, you may trust them absolutely for the



time. So after satisfying the cravings of hunger which the keen mountain air had produced, I, in all confidence in my host, stretched myself on the mat before the fire, and went to sleep in my wet clothes. My less fortunate companion, I heard next morning, had tried in vain to follow my example, for sleep would not visit his weary but anxious eyelids.



## CHAPTER XI.

We part with our brother—Ichtiman—Mutiny amongst the ambulance—The Stafford House party overtake us—The zaptieh's responsibility—M. Baptiste's culinary talent—Sophia—The Bulgarians mulcted—The skin bazaar—A good bed for campaigning—Ready for any emergency—The hospital at Sophia is good—Gavanchio—A good Bulgarian—The horse-fair—The sellers spoil their own market.

THE following morning, at the earliest dawn of day, we woke our host, and after bestowing upon him a liberal backshish, and telling him we should look upon him henceforth as our very brother, mounted our horses, and at their best speed hastened to put a few miles between us and the Circassian village, not feeling sure that, although our friend had let us off, some of his fellow-villagers might not, on hearing that two unprotected Giaours were on the road, be tempted to follow us, and ease us of our horses, saddles, and purses.



The Circassian village was situated on the highest point of the last range of this branch of the Balkans, and we had a ride down-hill to Ichtiman, which we reached in two hours and a half. Here we came up with the whole ambulance in a state of open mutiny. The Englishmen especially were loud in their complaints. Dr. Sarell had ridden on to Sophia, and left the ambulance without any responsible head. They could obtain nothing to eat in Ichtiman but eggs, of which they had had a number boiled for the journey. They begged me to take command of the party; but this of course I was not entitled to do.

As they were on the point of leaving when I arrived, I could only wish them "God speed," and let them go, intending to let them keep their start of one day a-head of me.

At midday Mr. Cullen's party arrived, having spent a night of great anxiety on our account at Palanka. The ill repute of the neighbourhood was well known to him, and the zaptieh who should have kept close to us on leaving Yeni Keui had been turned out into the dark and rain to produce us. Not being able to do so, he had not returned.



Whether he had fallen over the precipice, or, in his despair at not finding us, jumped over, they knew not. He was responsible for our safety, and if anything had happened to us punishment would have fallen upon his head, and his life perhaps been made to pay the forfeit of ours.

Great therefore was their delight at finding us safe and sound at Ichtiman. M. Baptiste, who had been very sad, they said, all the morning, began to jump about with joy, and to prepare to surpass in our honour even his former successes in the culinary art. This he certainly did, for in less than an hour a sumptuous breakfast was produced from the same village, which for the ambulance party had nothing but eggs. Our breakfast consisted of roast fowls, fresh butter, milk, honey, eggs, wine, &c.

At two o'clock we resumed our journey, the road lying parallel with the partly constructed line of railway between Tatar Bazardjik and Sophia, the heavy cuttings and embankments of which are finished, requiring only the wood frame-work of the viaducts, and the laying of the permanent way, to complete it. We stopped the night in a



block-house, by one of these viaducts, half-way between Ichtiman and Sophia.

We arrived at Sophia at twelve at noon the next day, 15th October, and found that the members of our ambulance were quartered in different cafés.

Accommodation had been retained for us in one of which a Frenchman was proprietor. He told us that we could order whatever we pleased regardless of expense, as the Bulgarians would pay for it. It seemed that, knowing they would have to find quarters for the party, the Bulgarian community, making a virtue of necessity, had agreed amongst themselves to share the expense of our lodging at the different restaurants of the town. Our landlord tried to tempt us with several fictitious brands of claret, but, after trying a Château Lafite to please him, wishing to save the Bulgarian community an unnecessarily heavy bill, we confined ourselves to Servian beer, which we found not bad.

This is only a mild example of how the industrious Bulgarian is mulcted to save the pocket of the easy-going, indolent Turk. Upon the loyal Bulgarian population alone,



always excepting the refugees from the Russian invasion, come the expenses and punishment of this war. Their arabas, bullocks, and they themselves to drive them, are requisitioned for months together; their cattle are taken to feed the army; their hay and barley to feed the horses of the cavalry.

While the Government are publishing their proclamations of indemnity to the disaffected, they are daily by their treatment of the loyal, showing what the rebels may expect if they return to their loyalty.

And yet, in spite of this extortion, the Bulgarian, by his hard work alone, becomes well to do, while his Turkish neighbour remains poor.

Sophia is a pretty town; the streets are narrow, badly paved, and muddy, as in all the towns of Turkey, but there is an air of prosperity and life about it which is wanting in the purely Turkish towns. The shopkeepers are either Bulgarians or Jews,—there is a large Jewish community here.

The chief industry of the town is the dressing of skins, an industry confined exclusively to the Bulgarians. The English party



went in a body to the skin bazaar to buy sheepskin jackets, gloves, &c.; these are made with the fur inside, and the skin, dressed to the softness of a glove, and white as snow, outside. A coat of this manufacture could be bought for 1*l.* sterling, and nothing better could be desired to keep out the cold.

Bearing in mind the experience of my night in the Balkans, I ordered a sack of Bulgarian home-spun, about six feet by two and a half, and lined with soft lambskin. Than this nothing could form a better bed for a campaign. I also invested in a sheepskin jacket and a pair of lambskin breeches, all with the wool inside. The sack for my bed, rolled up with the jacket inside, made a parcel not too large to strap behind my saddle, while strapped in front of me I had a Bulgarian capote (which is like an ulster), of magnificent thick cloth, quite waterproof. Thus equipped I was prepared for any emergency, and could have made myself comfortable for the night in a ditch.

The hospitals at Sophia were the best I had seen. A fine building, the konak, had been given up for this purpose. The patients here



had beds with mattrass and sheets, and there were more cubic feet of air per head than is usually allowed in Turkish hospitals. It is a pity there are not a few more hospitals like this for the Turkish wounded.

I here engaged a Bulgarian servant, Gavanchio by name, a most intelligent fellow, who had been educated at the American College at Bebek, on the Bosphorus. He spoke English, French, Turkish, Italian, Greek, and Bulgarian fluently. He was an honest, good fellow, and was altogether the best Bulgarian I had seen.

While we were at Sophia a horse-fair took place in the streets of the town. I got up early, to see how prices were, and before the other members of the ambulance were out found them very low—I could have bought good horses for 5*l.*; but as soon as the others made their appearance, it got to be known amongst the sellers that there were a lot of English doctors in the town, and then I could not buy the same horses for 10*l.* The sellers cut their own throats, though; for, finding prices so low at first, I advised Dr. Sarell to



buy for his ambulance, and when after breakfast he gave me *carte blanche* to do this, I was unable to make one single purchase for him. I had bought early in the morning, for Dr. Vachell, a very nice little bay gelding showing some blood, with which he was delighted.



## CHAPTER XII.

An attempt to photograph the ambulance—A moonlight ride—Garibaldi—His talents as a coach-builder—Ambulance waggon No. 3 breaks down—Tashkessen—I return for the ambulance waggon—We pitch a tent by the road-side, and prepare to make ourselves comfortable—A find—Mock-turtle soup—Douglas extemporizes tea-cups—The araba-builder arrives—We crawl into our skins—Gavanchio gives me a list of Bulgarian grievances—A charge against the zaptieh—Gold in the Balkans—The Italian coach-builder arrives—Triumph of the Bulgarian araba-builder—A hunt in the standing maize—Just in time to save a cowardly blow—Requisitioning against my inclination—No help for it—We make another start.

ATTACHED to our ambulance was a photographer, whom Dr. Sarell had brought on from Adrianople, for the purpose, I presume, of sending illustrations to the pictorial papers of Europe. Splendid opportunities had been lost of photographing the party amidst the fine scenery of Trajan's Pass, the



wreck of the second ambulance at the foot of the precipice, &c.; but now it was decided that a photograph should be taken outside the town, just before starting the arabas on their journey to Orkhanie.

These were all assembled in a good position; the members of the ambulance were grouped on horseback, having as middle distance the white tents of three Turkish regiments encamped on an acclivity, and the fine peak of Mount Vitos, one of the Balkans, as a background. Everything was ready, but no Dr. Sarell appeared.

After an hour's waiting this gentleman and his aides-de-camp drove on to the ground in a carriage. The party, which had been posed once or twice and got into the right focus, had dispersed, and were riding about, tired of waiting. At length they were all got together again, and everything was ready, when, just as the word "steady" was given, the upper rim of the setting sun disappeared behind the western range of the Balkans. The photograph was taken, but it was of course a failure; no copy was kept of it; and the plate itself was destroyed.



The arabas were now started for Orkhanie, one britzka being kept to carry our light baggage which was to follow with us the next day.

Dr. Sarell had given orders that we were to start at daylight the next morning, 18th October, but the moon was up the next night before we were *en route*.

We had a very pleasant ride by moonlight, the Englishmen keeping together, Dr. Sarell and his aides-de-camp having a carriage. The road was good and the weather fine, and we thought we should be able to keep up the pace—we were then going a trot with only an occasional walk—till we reached Orkhanie, as the slow-travelling arabas, being one day ahead, ought to arrive at Orkhanie quite as soon as ourselves. What was our disgust, therefore, on completing our tenth mile from Sophia, to find the two ambulance waggons and two arabas drawn up by the side of the road!

It must be noted that we had made another addition to our staff before leaving Sophia. An Italian joiner, who rejoiced in the name of Garibaldi, was enlisted for the express



purpose of repairing any slight damage that might occur to the ambulance waggons. His talents had been put to the proof in repairing the pole of one of these *bêtes noires*, which had snapped in getting it into position when posing for the photograph.

This worthy Italian was therefore with the ambulances, and from him we learnt that one of them was *hors de combat* owing to the wheel having stuck, and refusing to revolve on the axle. He had detained the other ambulance and the two arabas for company, and for the assistance the bullock-drivers might render if required.

A zaptieh was immediately sent back to Sophia to bring out a coach-builder, the Italian telling us where one of his own nationality could be found; and we rode on to Tashkessen, where we were to spend the night. When we arrived, Dr. Sarell asked me if I would return at daylight to see to the safe conduct of these ambulances over the Balkans. I agreed to do this, and accordingly started with young Douglas, one of the dressers whose name I mentioned before, in whom I had great confidence, a very



fine young fellow, always, ready for any emergency. He was waiting for his commission in the army from the 4th Middlesex militia, and came out here to see the campaign. We took with us also my servant Gavanchio and a zaptieh. The services of the latter I felt sure we should require, as I had no faith in the coach-builder who was to arrive from Sophia. I had therefore formed my own plans.

At nine a.m. we reached the spot where we had left the ambulances the night before, and, finding the coach-builder had not arrived, I at once despatched a second zaptieh, who had been staying in charge of them, to the governor of Sophia with a request that the coach-builder might be requisitioned and sent at once. The third zaptieh I despatched to the various villages in the neighbourhood to procure a long spar of oak, suitable for an axle, together with a Bulgarian araba-builder, eight yoke of bullocks, another araba, some provender for our horses, a pair of fowls, some eggs, bread, and milk.

One of the arabas was luckily laden with



tents and stretchers, and, as I saw that we should have to spend the night where we were, and that the black clouds were already gathering for rain, I pitched one of these by the side of the road, got two brancards put together for our beds, and with our horses picketed by the tent, determined to make ourselves as comfortable as possible under the circumstances.

I then proceeded with the bullock-drivers, working under Garibaldi's directions, to detach the fore wheels from the damaged ambulance. To do this we had to prop up the body, and, in removing some packing-cases for this purpose, what was our delight at discovering that one of them contained provisions. Tins of mock-turtle soup, tea, sugar, biscuits, preserved milk, and fresh butter, &c. made their appearance. Robinson Crusoe could not have hailed his discoveries on board the deserted ship with more delight than we did ours. We were now prepared to stay for a week, with every prospect of faring better than our companions who had gone on.

We very quickly requisitioned the case of



provisions, which was installed as table in our tent. An earthen pot was produced by the bullock-drivers, a fire lighted, and some muddy water put on to boil for tea. The tea was easily enough made, but what to drink it out of when made? We could not wait till the earthen pot got cool enough to apply it to our lips, for the tea would be cold too. However, Douglas produced one of the Abyssinian filters sold by a shop in Fleet Street, and with the tin case of this we managed to extemporize two cups, which held about a wineglassful each. A tin of mock-turtle had by this time been warmed, and with also a tin of tongue, some biscuit and butter, we felt sure that we were breakfasting the best of the whole ambulance that morning.

In the evening our zaptieh returned with six yoke of oxen and drivers, the oak spar, Bulgarian araba-builder, and the provisions and provender ordered.

I gave directions for the builder to set to work the first thing in the morning to hew a wood axletree out of the spar, and to fit a pair of wheels which I would remove from one of the two arabas, and instructed him to



make the axle longer than the iron one, so as to allow the wheels more play, and thereby enable the carriage to turn.

Sunset brought the threatened rain, and we congratulated ourselves upon having our tent pitched. The unfortunate arabajeers (bullock-drivers) huddled round their fire and covered themselves with their skin coats.

After a famous supper off fowls roasted on our camp fire, and sardines, which we ate without plates or knives and forks, we crawled into our skin sacks, which we had spread on the brancards, and giving Gavanchio a few tents to make his bed, composed ourselves for the night.

I lay awake, nevertheless for some hours, listening to the stories of Gavanchio regarding the hardships of the Bulgarians. I found him a deep-thinking, well-educated, intelligent man. He saw the faults of his countrymen, but could ascribe them to their true cause—the misrule of the Turks, and the bad example of their own priests.

“What can you expect?” he said; “that very zaptieh whom you sent to procure your provisions—for which, according to your cus-



tom, I know you will pay—when he arrived at the village, ordered for himself a supper of the best, for which he did *not* pay. While he was eating it all the young women of the village were sent out of the way, as it was expected that, according to the custom of his fellows, he would order them to be brought before him, so that he might pick out the best-looking of them, and this doubtless he would have done had he not been obliged to return to you.”

He also told me that the country was teeming with mineral wealth, that he knew of a large deposit of bituminous salt close to his native town, and of more than one copper lode ; that to the same place the Bulgarians brought gold, which they found in the Balkans, to be worked into rude ornaments by a native smith, but that this they never dared to show, as they knew that punishment instead of reward would be meted out to them for having discovered gold.

He said, “It is not the interest of the pashas to develope the country ; they grow sufficiently rich upon grinding down the poor ; and they know that, if the wonderful



wealth of the country became generally known, there would be an influx of foreigners who would very soon spoil their game."

This last remark I knew to be true. The Turks do everything they can to discourage capital coming to the country to develop its wonderful mineral resources. I think the experience of a gentleman now in Constantinople can confirm this, he having laid out some thousands on a copper-mine which he had purchased, and being still, after six years of labour, prevented from removing a pound of the ore which he has brought to the surface.

At ten p.m. we were roused by a carriage stopping opposite our tent. This contained our Italian coach-builder from Sophia, under the charge of the second zaptieh.

It was too late to do anything that night in the pouring rain, so he turned into the ambulance waggon with his compatriot Garibaldi.

In the morning he put the end of the iron axle near the fire, but could only succeed in working the wooden part of the wheel off the iron socket, which still remained fixed to the axle, having become welded, as it were, to it.



It was unnecessary for him to tell me that he could do nothing without taking the axle and socket to his forge ; but by this time the wooden axle was complete, and when he returned he had the mortification of seeing himself supplanted by his despised brother artificer, the Bulgarian. The latter had lashed his wooden axle to the iron frame from which we had unscrewed the iron axle, and, after tarring the ends to prevent the friction, had fitted on the wheels off one of the arabas—a grand success, this ambulance being, in fact, much more serviceable than the one still remaining undamaged. I had no fear of getting *this*, at any rate, over the Balkans.

After yoking the oxen, I despatched the ambulances and one of the arabas under the charge of a zaptieh ; the other araba, being minus a pair of wheels, of course could not carry a load ; so when I had paid the owner for the wheels I had taken (much to his surprise), he yoked his oxen to the frame and fore wheels and decamped.

We had to wait till one of the other two zaptiehs whom I had sent off for the purpose



might return with a fresh araba, which we hoped would not be long. Late in the afternoon one did return with a yoke of oxen, but no araba; he could not find one anywhere. The villagers had hidden them in the standing maize, small blame to them, poor creatures!

Douglas started in one direction to beat the standing maize, while I and the zaptieh, accompanied by the Bulgarian and his yoke of oxen, took another. We soon came upon the front half of an araba, to which we yoked the oxen. The zaptieh, being convinced that the other half was hidden somewhere near, rode up to a party of two Bulgarian women and two boys, who were husking maize close by. The women ran away, but the two little men stood their ground. The zaptieh tried to persuade these to divulge where the other half of the araba was, and, not succeeding, he raised his arm with a long stick to strike. The eldest boy, about thirteen years old, never flinched, and I was only just in time to save his back from the descending blow. I gave the plucky little fellow a bigger bit of silver than I dare say he had ever seen be-



fore, at which his eyes glistened, but I went away, feeling quite ashamed.

After searching in vain for the other half, we returned to the road, where we waited patiently for an empty araba to come by. A train of wounded from Plevna passed, but no empty araba. It was getting late in the afternoon, and I was beginning to look forward with no pleasure to a second night of it, as we had sent the tent and provisions on in the ambulance, when an unfortunate Bulgarian made his appearance with an araba laden with wood. This was at once turned out by the road-side, and the necessary half araba requisitioned by the zaptieh, much against my inclination; but what was to be done? It was clearly my duty to take it, as this is the only mode of obtaining transport for this war. After all, this poor fellow's case was not harder than that of those who had been dragged from their villages with their oxen to draw the ambulance waggon. Leaving the zaptieh to bring on the araba, Douglas, myself, and Gavanchio rode on to the foot of the Balkans, where we found the ambulance waggon and the other araba



drawn up outside a khan. In this khan we got quarters for the night, placing our brancards in an empty room with open windows.

We found here two immense encampments, one of arabas full of wounded men going to Sophia—amongst whom was a Binbashi, whose wounds Douglas dressed, and to whom we gave a bowl of delicious tea—the other of arabas loaded with provisions for revictualling Plevna.

The proprietor of the khan was a Bulgarian; and Douglas, having prescribed for his child, who was suffering from colic, was immediately beset by a crowd of invalids who all described their different ailments. He had a box of compound rhubarb pills with him, and he divided this amongst them. I have no doubt, like Professor Holloway's pills, they cleaned out the bowels of a few of them, which was probably all they wanted; and the reputation of that wonderful English hakim who effected so many cures with one box of pills, will, I dare say, live for ever in the neighbourhood. It is astonishing the faith the poor



people have in the power of the English hakim.

After supper I took Gavanchio with me as interpreter, and went out to have a chat over their camp fire with our bullock-drivers. These were all small tenant farmers, hard-working, lusty fellows. Their tale of woe was piteous. All of them had their harvest rotting in the fields ; most of them had only the day before returned from Plevna, and their bullocks were not recovered from the fatigue of the journey. They described themselves as weary of their lives, and the expression of their careworn faces did not belie them. I said, "You have lost your best friend by the wanton cruelties of your people to women and children,—England, who took your part before, and rebuilt your houses with her own money ; and you have gone over to Russia, who is only working for her own interest, and using you as a tool. You are now not called upon to fight ; but Russia will force you all to become soldiers when Bulgaria is a Russian province."

"That is very true," said the most intelligent of them, who was generally



the spokesman, "but what can you expect after the many years of oppression which we have suffered? There are sure to be some excesses committed by the wicked amongst us at the first prospect of freedom. As for being taken to fight as soldiers, we would rather die as men than live as dogs. You are now going to take us to Plevna, from which perhaps some of us will never return; our bullocks will be requisitioned there to take back wounded to Sophia, or they will be killed to feed Osman Pasha's army; and if we return alone, we shall fall victims to the first Circassian who meets us, who will practise upon us with his revolver or sword. Our bodies will be found by the road-side, and passers-by will say when they see them, there is another Bulgar giaour less. Our bullocks, our farm produce, our wives, our daughters, our very lives we cannot call our own; our oppressors take them at their pleasure."

I promised if I could get fresh bullocks at that place, to release theirs when I got to the top of the mountain, and immediately sent the zaptiehs to requisition some from



the neighbouring villages. They returned in the course of the night with twelve cows, and I hoped these might suffice to take us into Orkhanie, as I heard that from the top of the range to Orkhanie it was all down-hill.



## CHAPTER XIII.

Delay at starting—A pontoon train—Russian field-pieces—Ascending the mountain—The mountain road—Detention of my one sound ambulance—A wheel broken—My way of bringing the waggons round the sharp corners—We reach the top of the mountain—Descent with cows—A Babel of tongues—We come upon a Turkish fort—Kamarli—The defile of Orkhanie—Wounded men—Severity of the traffic—Soldiers' graves—Shoes made of bullock-hide—The soldiers' knapsacks—The refugees—The Pomaks—Their religion—Deserted wounded—Hard-heartedness of a Bulgarian driver—We put the wounded under the care of a Turk, and soon after reach Orkhanie—We there find our party at dinner—I am put in the seat of honour.

*Oct. 20th.*—We had to wait about an hour before we could get off, as there were a pontoon train and some hundreds of arabas, loaded with grain for Plevna, going up, and some hundreds of other arabas, containing the wounded and refugee families, coming down. In the



latter convoy I observed two Russian field-pieces which had been taken in a skirmish on the Plevna road.

At last, when these had all defiled, we set our train in motion to ascend the mountain, having sixteen bullocks yoked to one ambulance, and twelve to that ambulance to which I had attached the araba wheels (and which was only half loaded), and six to each of the arabas.

The road was cut in the side of the mountain, and wound backwards and forwards zigzag fashion, the turnings consequently being very sharp.

At the first of these I had the mortification to see my single hitherto sound ambulance, with the wheel jammed against the side, beginning to topple. In another instant it would have been over, had I not quickly summoned nearly all the Bulgarians alongside, who held it up. The wheel, however, gave way, the spokes breaking short off.

In almost less time than it takes to relate it, I had the bullocks out and a prop under the waggon; and in a few minutes, having supplied the place of the



broken wheel by one of those we had dismounted from the other waggon, we were on our way again. I then went to the head of the train, and at every turning we came to had the bullocks unyoked from each waggon, and got the Bulgarians to put their shoulders to it, and lift it bodily round; and by this tedious process alone was I enabled to bring the train safely to the top of the mountain.

Here, according to promise, I dismissed the old set of bullocks, and commenced the descent with four cows to each conveyance. Then I had, if possible, more difficulty than in the ascent; but as my *amour-propre* was interested, I superintended the turning of each waggon myself, enforcing strict silence as a preliminary measure (for at first the Babel of tongues—Turkish, Italian, Bulgarian—was fearful) and giving the word of command in my best Turkish.

We found at the top a Turkish fort, and the officer in command came out and chatted with us. This was Kamarli. There were one or two well-placed batteries to command the road from both north and south ascents, but not sufficient guns. This



pass, if properly fortified, might be held for ever with a force of a few thousand, and against the whole Russian army.

After our descent from the main range, we found ourselves in the defile of Orkhanie, which has a gradual descent to the plain of that name, winding round range after range of hills covered with low brushwood and some timber, principally beech. The autumnal tints caused this defile to appear at its best, and certainly it looked lovely.

The hills on each side were perfectly inaccessible to artillery or cavalry, and only practicable to such troops as the Arnauts and the Tyrolese, a description of soldier in which Russia is peculiarly deficient.

This pass, about twenty miles long, was crowded in its full length with one long chain of wounded and refugees ascending, and another of supplies for Plevna descending. I noticed a great many fresh graves, doubtless where some poor wounded soldier had ceased to suffer the agony of the jolting of the araba, and the load of the bullocks had been lightened by transferring his body to the peaceful grave.



At every few yards was the carcase of a bullock, showing how severe the traffic had been. Their hides had been removed from all these, and converted into sandals for the troops.

The Turkish soldier, the most economical in the world, on service does not even cost his Government for shoe-leather, as he shoes himself from the hides of the cattle that are slaughtered for the army, or that die on the road. The provident soldier will always have a couple of strips of hide seasoning in the bundle which, in place of a knapsack, he carries on his back. These are oblong, with small holes bored all round the edge, through which a string of the same hide is passed as a lace. They cover the foot, it having first been wrapped in rags, cloth, or anything to keep it enveloped, like a slipper, the string of hide being wound round the leg as far as the knee, after the fashion of a Calabrian peasant.

For the whole of that day we continued our course through this beautiful defile, passing a continual stream of creaking arabas.



The refugees were renegade Mohammedan Bulgarians, or Pomaks, who seem to have inherited the failings of both races, the indolence of the Turk and the cowardice and treachery of the Bulgarian. Having sacrificed their religion to their worldly position, they are despised alike by Turks and Bulgars; speaking only the Bulgarian language, while professing the faith of Islam—an anomaly.

As we neared the end of this pass, the sun having disappeared behind the range, we came upon one araba, the last of the train, in which there were two wounded men, halted by the road-side. The poor fellows appealed to us for help. The Bulgarian driver, finding himself last, and his bullocks knocked up, had taken the opportunity to run away, and had left them to their fate. The rest of the train were too far ahead to be stopped, so we quickly rigged one of our stretchers, and placing the men on it, carried them into the house of a Turk by the way-side. This man was not disposed to receive his wounded countrymen at first, and it required considerable taunting on my part to induce him to see it in its



right light—"that here were we, of another country and religion, succouring the soldiers who were fighting for him and his home, while he refused even to admit them for a few hours into his house. Did he call that the proper feeling of an Osmanli?"

After we had made them as comfortable as we could, and received their warm expressions of gratitude, we went on our way; but a few hundred yards farther on we met an empty araba, and thinking it would be better to send them on to get their wounds dressed, we returned again to the house, and carried them on the stretchers to the fresh araba, starting them in charge of a Turk, to follow the train.

At about seven o'clock we reached Orkhanie, and after some difficulty found our party, who were established in the Jewish synagogue, where they had opened their mess, and had just finished dinner, seated round packing-cases, out of which a table had been extemporized.

We were received with shouts of welcome and considerable surprise was expressed that we had actually got the



*bêtes noires*, our ambulance waggon, over the Balkans.

I had the seat of honour, next to Dr. Sarell, vacated for me, to whom I related our adventures, and received his thanks for the service I had rendered him.

The members of the ambulance had quarters in different houses in the town, and I was told by Dr. Sarell that Douglas and I could take up ours in the operating-room of the hospital, to which, being very tired, we were glad to retire at nine o'clock.



## CHAPTER XIV.

The Orkhanie hospital—Pandemonium—A charnel-house—The surgeons' work commences—Dr. Macpherson—A museum of bullets—Incapacity of the Turkish surgeons—Dr. Bond Moore's letter—Osman Pasha's want of consideration for his wounded—A hard day's work—Gratitude of the wounded—A strange superstition—We start for Lukovitza—6000 wounded from Plevna—Chefket Pasha's army—How Orkhanie might be defended—Trajan's Pass—Reouf Pasha's mistake at Shipka—We come upon the bodies of Bulgarians lying by the road—A wounded woman—The Turks try to persuade us that she is an idiot—Poma Keui—A great battle being fought—Where is Dr. Sarell?—My stirrup missing—How I recovered it—Lynch law administered by the zaptieh—We ride to Telliche—A post on the road to Plevna—An old acquaintance—My first Turkish master—Gabrovitza—A convoy of arabas for Plevna—Telliche—Ismael Hakki Pasha—A hot position—Dr. Sarell leaves Telliche—The Russian dead—A horrible sight—200 wounded assassinated—Extermination à la Circassienne—The hundred years' war between Russia and Circassia—Dr. MacKellar leaves for England.

THE state of things in this hospital beggars



all description. The poor wounded lay on the floor in a confused mass, in the passages, in the rooms, on the staircase just as they had been brought in, with their uniform still on them; and some of them, who had been wounded a fortnight ago, had only had their wounds bound up once, the bullets and pieces of shell still in them. The smell from the wounds was something fearful.

Never shall I forget the night I passed in that pandemonium amidst the shouts of those not so badly wounded, the groans of the dying, and the cries for water. In the morning, on the floor of the building in which we slept, there were eight dead!

On showing me into my bedroom, the gentleman who acted as chambermaid had to caution me to be careful where I trod, till he struck a light, as operating had been going on all day, and the legs and arms were strewed about the floor.

At daylight the next morning, 21st October, after an hour or two of feverish sleep, the sleep only of fatigue, I sprang from my stretcher, already dressed as I was, and rushed out of doors to get a draught of fresh



air, and a little relief to my brain, still ringing with the awful cries of distress, which even in my sleep I had continued to hear all night.

After a cup of coffee and a roll we all met at the hospital to work like niggers. I attached myself to the ward which had been told off to Dr. Macpherson.

Here we found twelve patients in a small room where there ought not to have been more than six. One by one we got the poor fellows into clean shirts, and taking a section of the floor at a time, had it well washed, arranged some palliasses stuffed with hay side by side, till the whole floor was covered with beds, and sprinkled the room with carbolic acid, which killed the sickening smell which arises from old wounds. Dr. Macpherson then commenced to dress the patients' wounds.

These were something awful; they had never been properly dressed, although they were most of them a fortnight old; some were full of maggots, and poor fellows would almost inevitably die from wounds which, if attended to in time, would have now been almost healed.



One of our party made a collection, quite a small museum, of bullets and pieces of shell extracted that morning, which had been some of them a month in the patients' body.

So much for the Turkish surgeons, and yet with all this, Gazi Osman Pasha sent a message to Orkhanie, forbidding our ambulance to advance any farther!

I think it will not be out of place if I give an extract from the letter dated October 15th, of the correspondent to the *Standard* of the 14th November:—

“An unpleasant incident occurred yesterday, illustrating to its full extent the contempt for everything and anybody European which characterizes Osman Pasha. On the demand of Chefket Pasha, who was going to take the command at Orkhanie, Dr. Bond Moore, the director of the Adrianople Stafford House Hospital, had joined the relieving forces, with several volunteers and a considerable amount of stores, there being, according to the avowal of Chefket and Kiazim Pashas, the most complete want of adequate medical assistance, both with their troops and at Plevna. Dr. MacKellar, delegate of Baron Mundy for



inspecting the Turkish hospitals, had also repaired to Orkhanie with six English surgeons. Two German and two English doctors in the Turkish service had been directed by Temple Bey, surgeon-in-chief of the hospitals at Orkhanie, to reinforce this medical staff. These gentlemen, on arriving here, collectively reported themselves to Osman Pasha, who, instead of offering them assistance in any way, coolly told them that their services were not needed at Plevna, and that they had better go back at once to Sofia, as he did not intend to keep any wounded at Plevna, and considered himself amply provided with surgeons. The lowest estimate I have heard of the wounded actually in this town is four thousand five hundred, not counting the sick; six thousand is nearer the truth. There are, in all, nineteen doctors, most of whom, as is usually the case with the Levantine doctors in the Turkish service, are neither skilful nor energetic. The hospital arrangements are most wretched. Osman Pasha did not hesitate to refuse and to order away a body of surgeons who, in every other country, would have been received with open arms. The cost of trans-



port of the stores, the salary of the surgeons and volunteers during the time they spent in coming here, and other expenses, are calculated at more than 1000*l*.

“This is not the first occasion on which I have observed that Turkish Pashas, generally speaking, utterly neglect their wounded, nay, practise indirectly every possible means to get rid of them. Said a brigade-general to me, ‘I am not soft-hearted, but when Suleiman Pasha forced me to leave Eski Zaghra, taking only 158 out of 272 wounded men I had in my brigade with me, leaving the others to the merciless revenge of the Bulgarians, I did weep. Yet there was no necessity for this; we were in no hurry, and could have obtained as many additional bullock carts as we wanted within a day’s time.’ And Reouf Pasha, after his flight to Karabunar, left dozens of severely wounded behind him, and for three entire days never thought of sending patrols to look after them. On the fourth day cavalry went with bullock-carts, and picked up a number of unfortunate beings in a state which horrified the two English surgeons present at Karabunar. After a long



experience with different Turkish armies in the field, it is my sincere conviction that most of the military Turkish Pashas neglect their wounded in a shameful manner, and that they only accept a certain number of European doctors in the Turkish service in order to be able to face European inquiries, and only tolerate the intervention of the English charitable societies because they cannot help doing so.

“The following is the translation of a letter in French, which was handed to-day to Osman Pasha, as a protest against his decision to remove all his wounded:—

“To his Excellency the Muchir Osman Pasha.

“Your Excellency,—I yesterday had the honour to receive your Excellency's reply, declining the assistance of myself and little staff of volunteers in the care of your wounded soldiers.

“Your Excellency will permit me to point out that previously to personally applying for permission to serve, I had inspected the various houses full of wounded Ottoman subjects in Plevna, and had convinced myself of the urgent need for immediate help.

“It was my painful duty to see amongst those 5000 wounded men fever, famine, and gangrene, feasting side by side with small-pox on your Excellency's crippled soldiers.

“In accordance with your Excellency's order I leave



your camp to-morrow, together with the mules kindly lent to me by his Excellency Kiazin Pasha for the transport of my *cacolets* and the escort of his Excellency Chefket Pasha, which has been guarding the Stafford House stores from Orkhanie.

“Humanity will not allow me to deprive your Excellency’s unfortunate men of the comforts sent out from England for them ; I have therefore given over to your Excellency’s chief Turkish surgeon, Colonel Hassil Bey, the whole of the medicines, bandages, stretchers, appliances, soup, &c., which I brought with me, since it is your Excellency’s wish that an English surgeon should not administer them.

“I should not be doing my duty as the only Stafford House surgeon here, were I not to urgently protest in my professional capacity on their behalf against the unnecessary transport of wounded to Sofia. The villages of Lukovitché, Jablanitza, and the town of Orkhanie are ready to receive them ; and to transport to Sofia men in the deplorable condition in which I have found them to-day will result only in sowing the Orkhanie Pass with corpses.

“I remain, your Excellency’s humble servant,

“R. BOND MOORE, Stafford House.

“Plevna, 15th October, 1877.”

We had met Dr. Bond Moore at the end of the Orkhanie Pass on his way back to Sophia, and had stopped to chat with him. He was overflowing with indignation against Osman Pasha, for the want of consideration he had shown for his wounded in Plevna.



I think I have shown a few pages farther back, that when we passed, only a week after Dr. Bond Moore's letter, his words were already beginning to be verified, that, to remove the wounded to Sophia would be to "sow the Orkhanie Pass with corpses." For had we not found every few yards a newly-made grave? However justified Osman Pasha was in clearing out his wounded from Plevna, I think he is much to be blamed for the order he sent to detain our ambulance at Orkhanie. Notwithstanding this order, Dr. Sarell very properly resolved to advance to Lukovitza half way between Plevna and Orkhanie, and establish there a dressing-depôt with a surgeon and dresser, to make a break in the five days from Plevna to Orkhanie, a journey which the wounded must otherwise perform without having their bandages removed, a measure which no doubt would be the saving of many lives, and the alleviation of much pain.

To return to the affairs of our particular ward—it took Dr. Macpherson and myself the whole day to get it into something like order. The faces of the men after they had been



dressed, and with clean shirts on, were different to what they had been when we first made our appearance among them. What a change the hands of a few gentle women could have worked in that hospital! I did my best, fed those who could not feed themselves, put them into more comfortable positions, covered their legs with an extra blanket or great coat when they were cold, and was much touched by the gratitude the poor fellows showed. They kissed the hand that helped them over and over again, stroking me down lovingly, and invoking all sorts of blessings from Allah. Once or twice, while holding a patient whose wounds were being dressed, my feelings were too much for me, and I was obliged to turn away my head to hide my face from the poor sufferer, who might take from it a serious view of his own case. Many of them were wounded in two places, some of them in four; one man, whose reason was gone, had his head laid open by a sabre-cut.

The following day, October 22nd, the surgeons made a selection of the cases they recommended for amputation. Many of these were almost desperate, owing to the time



the patient had been neglected, and the low nervous state into which he had consequently sunk. Before operating it was necessary, by order of the Sultan, to obtain the patient's free consent; the reason for this is founded on a certain superstition of the Mohammedan faith. The Moslems believe that as they die, not only will their spirit, but their body, reappear in the next world; and many a devout follower of Mohammed will face the certainty of death, sooner than appear before his Prophet *minus* an arm or a leg. The loss of a limb being a mode of punishment under the old Mohammedan law, they dread being mistaken for culprits, instead of heroes, by their Prophet.

As soon as the advance to Lukovitza was decided upon, Dr. MacKellar and I began to prepare for the expedition. We went to the Caimacam, who requisitioned a couple of arabas for us. These I took round to the house we had converted into the ambulance store, and had them packed. We still wanted a trap to carry the medical stores and light baggage. A sharp servant of Dr. MacKellar's had been told to look out for one. He soon



came running in to tell us that an empty britzka was then going down the main street of the town on its way back to Sophia. This was a chance not to be lost; so we instantly gave chase, and came up with the britzka from behind, unseen by the driver, just as he stopped outside the town to feed his horses, thinking he was safe from pursuit. Dr. MacKellar sprang to their heads, while I mounted the box-seat of the britzka. The owner was a Turk, and showed some fight. He jumped up by my side and drove off. A struggle for the reins ensued, when, at Dr. MacKellar's suggestion, I took the disgusted Turk by the back of the neck and threw him into the road. By this time a zaptieh was on the scene. Dr. MacKellar, flourishing the Sultan's firman in his face, enlisted the new arrival on our side, and the Turk was marched back in triumph. I did not lose sight of him till, his britzka loaded and under the charge of our own escort (the sergeant of which had my special order to watch him), he was on the road for Lukovitza. This was a bit of requisitioning I rather enjoyed, as it was the first Turk I had seen subjected to it.



The man was very polite when I met him again at Lukovitza, and, I think, was filled with respect for the giaour who had dared to lay forcible hands upon a Turk, and one with his kummerbund, like that of all his kind, bristling with knives and pistols.

On the morning of the 23rd of October, a party of us, consisting of Dr. Sarell, Dr. MacKellar, Dr. Pinkerton, Dr. Vachell, M. Lorando, Douglas, Temple Bey, Turkish principal Medical Officer at Orkhanie (late Surgeon 18th Royal Irish, in the Crimea, having been twenty years in Turkish service), myself, three of the Levantine staff, and three servants, started for Lukovitza. The organization of this expedition was left to me, and I had had the hospital stores, and provisions for a fortnight, for the party we were going to leave at Lukovitza, with two tents and twenty brancards, packed and started off the night before, so that we had nothing to do, after dressing the more slightly wounded in a train which arrived from Plevna *en route* for Sophia, but to mount our horses and be off. The hospitals at Orkhanie were only intended for serious cases, which were too bad to under-



take the journey to Sophia—and at this time daily trains were passing through with wounded from Plevna. Osman Pasha was clearing out all his wounded, to the number of upwards of 6000.

We left Orkhanie at twelve o'clock mid-day on the 23rd October. Drs. MacKellar, Vachell, Manoorie, Douglas, and myself, being mounted, started off at a brisk trot, having arranged with Dr. Sarell, who followed with the remainder in two carriages, to rendezvous that night at Lukovitza. Just outside the town we passed the camp of Chefket Pasha's little army, said to number 15,000 men.

Orkhanie stands in a little plain surrounded by mountains. The range which we had to pass to get out of this punch-bowl was not very high, and there was little or no ascent from it, as we threaded our way through a defile. Here another very good stand could be made by the Turks. In fact, considering that the Russians would first have to pass this range, before they could get to Orkhanie, and then the much greater difficulty of the Orkhanie Pass, to be faced before arriving at Sophia, when there would still remain the



almost as formidable passage of Trajan's Pass, sometimes called the Ichtiman Pass, three ranges of mountains in all,—I say that if the Turks will only defend this line of advance into Roumelia with anything like spirit, it will be utterly impossible for the Russians to penetrate by this route into Roumelia. There remains then only Shipka, and with regard to the defence of that line a large force should be kept in the Kesanlik plain, for if, on the fall of Plevna, the Russians have a general amongst them, it is there they will try to break through. Once down on the Kesanlik plain, which the guns of Fort Nicholas command, there will be nothing between them and Adrianople, *viâ* Eski Zaghra,—the low range of hills on this side of Eski Zaghra being accessible for artillery and cavalry on both sides of the pass.

It is of course possible that Russia may think both these passages nuts too hard to crack, and may prefer to give Prince Milan orders to declare war, and after reducing Widdin, advance down the valley of the Timok, to co-operate with the army of the Grand Duke Nicholas.



But the Turkish force now in the plain at Shipka would make no stand against even a strong reconnoitring force led through the various passes, well known to the Bulgarians on both sides of the Shipka. Reouf Pasha's camp, which is only fortified on one side, that facing the mountains, and being quite open at the rear, would be easily carried, if taken in reverse; the positions in the Balkans at Shipka would be completely turned, and their garrisons, with all the guns in position unable to descend, would have to surrender at discretion.<sup>1</sup> At the time I write this, the sketch I could give of the situation at Shipka would be worth anything to the Russian generals; but if these memoirs ever come to be published, it will not be till long after the question is settled. To resume our travels.

In the pass we saw the bodies of Bulgarians lying by the road-side, some of whom could not have been dead many hours. These men had certainly been murdered, for there had been no fighting here.

<sup>1</sup> This was written at Novgorod, and what is here foreshadowed has since actually come to pass.



A little farther on we were startled by groans coming from the other side of the ditch, and there we found, lying on a bed of rushes covered over with straw, a young and good-looking Bulgarian woman. There was a Turkish encampment close by, and from it we sought an explanation of this woman's state. The Turks wanted to persuade us at first that the woman was an idiot who sought alms by the road-side, but we made one of them who talked Bulgarian to come with us, and from the poor creature herself we learned that she was wounded in the foot, and had been there for many days. We examined her foot, and found it half eaten off by gangrene. Both Dr. MacKellar and myself were determined that we would not leave her there to die, yet there was absolutely no means of moving her that night, so we decided to send one of the arabas back from Lukovitza the next morning.

About two miles brought us to Poma Keui, a very pretty village on the side of a hill, where we found the arabas containing our stores drawn up on an open space by the road-side. They had been stopped by the Binbashi in charge



of the post, who would not allow them to proceed any farther. It being then dark, we were told by the officer of the picket that we could not go any farther that night. We accordingly went on a hunting expedition for a house, and at last found one, out of which, however, we had previously to expel the lawful proprietor, a Mussulman, who was luckily without his family. We now returned to the main road for our arabas, and leaving word, with the officer of the picket stationed on the high road, where Dr. Sarell and the carriage party would find us, we returned to our quarters,—to a good fire, some lambs' fry and tea, with a glass of grog afterwards. Ten o'clock arriving without the other party putting in an appearance, we laid four of the brancards on the floor, having brought twenty with us from Orkhanie, and were soon fast asleep.

The next morning we were up at daylight, and very shortly afterwards heard heavy firing a few miles from us, with the rattle of musketry. This increasing in volume, it was evident to me that a great battle was being fought not many miles



from us, and I was particularly eager to get on and see it. But where were Dr. Sarell and his party? Besides I had determined not to desert the poor Bulgarian girl. I had ordered one of our escort, a Circassian sergeant, to take one of the arabas and go back and fetch her. He flatly refused to go back for the giaour woman, and said she had been there for three weeks and was mad. I resolved therefore to go back myself, and ordered him to accompany me. As he was responsible for my safety he was obliged to do this. Accordingly Dr. MacKellar and I ordered our horses to be brought out. When mine appeared there was only one stirrup on the saddle; the other had evidently been stolen, for I put the horse in the stable myself, dismounting at the door. A great stir was ostensibly made to find the missing stirrup and leather; but seeing that it was not likely to turn up unless some decision was shown, I called the zaptieh we had with us, told him that I was a Miralay (Colonel) of the new Gendarmerie force, that, unless the stirrup leather was found in ten minutes, I should proceed on my journey, and report



him to the Minister of Police, who would dismiss him from his lucrative post ; and to make some show of being in earnest, I made him enter in my note-book his name, his village, and the name of his officer. Being frightened lest he might not be allowed to rob Bulgarians any longer with impunity, but be instead himself drafted into the army, my gentleman began to bestir himself, and to lay about him amongst the crowd of lookers-on, inhabitants of the village, who had come to stare. The result was that in a few minutes one of these latter came out of a shed, which was used as a straw-loft, with the stirrup in his hand, where doubtless he himself had hidden it. The zaptieh then administered a little summary justice, and with a great deal of noise and shouting the bystanders (with the exception of the man who had "found" the stirrup and who was of course the real culprit) were seized one by one, laid flat on their faces, and received a bastinadoing administered with a broom-stick by the zaptieh. This is Turkish justice ! But the scene was so ridiculous that we could none of us do anything but hold our sides with laughter.



Dr. MacKellar and myself then started back to fetch the Bulgarian girl. One mile from the village we met the two carriages containing Dr. Sarell, Temple Bey, and party, who had spent a miserable night at Jablanitza. Their wraps being with us, they had made the best beds they could on the divans at the khan at that place, and had found it very cold. Travelling in Turkey, you do not find such a thing as an hotel. The last we had passed was at Adrianople. In the Turkish khans you are supposed to bring your own beds, and are lucky if you find so much as a divan to sleep upon.

We found the poor creature whom we were in search of lying just where we had left her the night before, and had her put into the araba and taken on to Lukovitza, where she would be attended to by Dr. Pinkerton, who was going to remain there with a dresser.

Dr. MacKellar and I now galloped on to Lukovitza, which we thought was the scene of the fighting which was still raging; but when we arrived there, we found that it was about five miles farther on, at a place called Telliche, one of the fortified posts established



by Chefket Pasha to keep open the road into Plevna. We had passed another of these posts on the top of the hill before entering Lukovitza. Lukovitza is a pretty little town in a valley on a tributary of the Isker. The Russians had been driven out of it by Chefket Pasha, when he pushed his convoy of provisions into Plevna. Before retreating, they had burnt a rather handsome bridge across the river.

As we reached the top of the hill, before descending into Lukovitza, we met a train of wounded going back to Orkhanie, which was halted there. On passing these I heard one of them calling to me, "Effendi! Effendi!" and going up to the araba, I recognized a young Turkish farmer, who had been my fellow-passenger on board the Trieste boat from Syra to Constantinople, and who had given me my first lessons in Turkish. I had then with me a Turkish grammar and vocabulary which I had bought in London before starting, and was studying the elements of Turkish on my way out. As I read the Turkish words out to him, he had given me the correct pronuncia-



tion, keeping the passengers on the quarter-deck in a roar of laughter by his wonderful power of illustrating in pantomime the meaning of each word as he uttered it. He was now in the Zouave uniform of the Turkish Nizams (regular troops of the line), and had been wounded in the leg in one of the last attacks which the Russians had made upon Plevna. I emptied all the loose silver I had in my pocket into his hand for old acquaintance' sake, and also gave him a note to young Jennings of our ambulance, whom we had left at Orkhanie, asking him to look after him as a friend of mine.

We had to wait at Lukovitza for Dr. Sarell's party, which we had passed on the road, so we spent the time in selecting a house for Dr. Pinkerton's head dressing-quarters. We had no difficulty in doing this, as the village was deserted, and pitched upon one which we caused to be swept and garnished; it was on the main road, and had a splendid litter yard covered with clean straw, where the wounded could be laid while their wounds were being dressed. To our surprise, Dr. Sarell, on his arrival, instead of



pushing on to the scene of action, stopped here for luncheon, although the firing was still distinctly audible. After luncheon, about five p.m., we started again for the scene of action; passed another post just out of Lukovitza, which could hardly be called fortified, as it only consisted of a very shallow bank, by way of a breastwork. The men (Nizams, regular troops of the line) were all ready for the enemy, had their rifles laid on the parapet, every now and then squinting along them, quite eager to be engaged. About a mile and a half farther on we came upon another of these posts, Gabrovitza, on a good position on the top of a hill, but not half fortified. Here was a considerable encampment of infantry and cavalry, and lying behind the hill a convoy of about 2000 arabas of provisions, systematically parked in divisions, waiting the arrival of others still on the way to push into Plevna.

We were stopped here by the colonel in command, who told us that he could not let us pass that night; that the Russians had been repulsed at Telliche, a post about three miles and a half further on. [Not a word did he



say about Gorni Dubnek, where the Turkish arms had that day suffered the first serious reverse of the war: but more of this hereafter when I come to it.] Next morning we might go through as early as we liked.

Accordingly, back we went to Lukovitza, where the English party of us spent a very jolly night in what had been the coffee-shop of the village, with a magnificent fire of wood on the hearth. This was needed, as there was a slight frost outside, and there were only shutters without glass to the windows of our abode.

Before daylight next morning we were stirring, and after a hurried breakfast started for Telliche, which we reached about nine o'clock. Here we found forty-nine wounded from the fight of the day before. The village lay in a hollow, beyond which there was a steep ascent. At the top of this ascent was a breastwork of sods and earth in the form of a horseshoe, at the toe of which there was an opening for the road to pass through. This post was armed with four six-pounder field-guns, and manned by 4000 Nizams of the Bosnian battalions.



There was also about a squadron, I should say, of cavalry employed as videttes, keeping open the communications with the other posts in rear, and extended some distance out on the right flank of the Plevna road.

Passing the deserted khan of the village, which, being the largest building in the place, had been used as a refuge for the wounded, we mounted the hill, and introduced ourselves to Ismael Hakki Pasha, the commandant, a little fat man, with quite a Tichborne corporation, who was all smiles and jollity. He told us that the Russians were at that moment making a demonstration against him; and, sure enough, on looking along the road, which for about a mile was quite straight and level, there, on each side of it and stretching across it, were cavalry skirmishers, and behind them four black masses, one on the road, and the others on either side. These, with a field-glass the chief of the staff lent me, I could distinctly make out to be battalions in motion. What there was behind them we could not tell, as the ground fell, but to me the force had all the appearance of the vanguard of a large army, and I told the pasha



that I expected before half an hour he would have a fresh attack. Even then the field-pieces in his work could have caused considerable consternation amongst those dark masses, and I wondered why he did not open fire, for the cavalry were within half a mile. At this period Dr. Sarell called us all away to attend to the wounded, and we descended the hill to the village. The side of that hill appeared to have been a hot place, for it was covered with corpses, both of man and beast. The khan, too, seemed to have been a mark for the enemy's artillery, for there was more than one shot hole in its walls. A shell had entered at one corner, exploded in one of the rooms, and a splinter of it smashing through the door, had killed a soldier on the other side, who must have been just on the point of entering. His mangled corpse still lay on the threshold. We had soon dressed the wounded, who were put into arabas, and sent off to Orkhanie. Dr. Sarell then called me on one side, and asked my opinion whether, as the head of the ambulance, it was not his duty to retire from Telliche, which was evidently on the point of being cut off. I told him I thought that he



was justified in going back with the bulk of the party he had brought with him, but that some ought to be left, as an attack seemed imminent; and that as a field ambulance our proper work was evidently going to commence there at once. I volunteered to remain myself; and on his asking the others, the three Englishmen, Dr. MacKellar, Dr. Vachell, and Mr. Douglas, offered to remain with me. As an interpreter was wanted, M. Lorando, a French Levantine, was asked if he would remain until an Englishman of the name of Atkinson, who had been engaged as dragoman, and who was at Orkhanie, could be sent up to relieve him. M. Lorando agreed to this; and the remainder, after bidding us good-bye, and promising to send us half of the stores which were at Lukovitza, took their departure.

We now picked out a cosy little cottage, with a stable for our horses, enclosed by a wall, where we fixed a long pole with one of the small flags of the Red Crescent on the roof, and began to make ourselves as comfortable as we could under the circumstances by rigging up five stretchers for beds. In the after-



noon we went to the breastwork behind which the pasha had his hut (just like one of our Crimean huts) dug out, to pay our respects. Finding him asleep, we asked leave from the officer next in command to go out and see the Russian dead, who were said to be lying close up to the work. I wanted to be able to judge what sort of a fight the Russians had shown. This was granted to us, and a bugler sent with us.

About forty yards from the breastwork, we came upon such a sight as perfectly horrified us. There were the white bodies of the Russian guardsmen stark naked, some with their heads cut off, some with their ears and noses, some hacked across the face with sword-cuts, and others covered with the wounds of bullets from revolvers, which had been held close enough for the powder to burn the skin. On examining these carefully it was easy to see where the first wound had been given, and this turned out almost invariably to be in the leg. Those who had been shot through the head or through the heart were stripped, but otherwise untouched. It was evident that they had not needed a



*coup de grâce*, but that the unfortunates, who could not run away, although perhaps only slightly wounded, had been cruelly murdered.

Dr. MacKellar called me solemnly to witness what we saw, and we turned back to our cottage, sick at heart, and disgusted with the cause of the Turks, to which before we had been warmly attached. Here, within 100 yards of the pasha's hut, were lying upwards of 200 bodies of gallant soldiers, who must have been simply assassinated. There were about 300 dead altogether. Of course, as Englishmen, we were more than horrified at these sights; we were profoundly depressed; in fact, our party, for the few days we were together, never recovered from the gloom which that spectacle had cast over it. This horrid crime was the work of the Circassians. We had met some of these men on the road between Lukovitza and Telliche, wearing the gold-laced uniforms of the Russian guards, each of them having a Berdan rifle slung across his back, with which the guards alone of all the Russian troops are armed; these they were offering for sale.



We should, however, in fairness judge these men by the light of M. Schuyler's story of the Khivan war. There we can read that, only a few years ago, a Russian General gave orders to his Cossacks to exterminate, "in the *Circassian fashion*," a whole tribe, men, women, and children, whose only apparent fault was their inability to pay a certain fine which had been imposed upon them. The Cossacks knew well what "in the *Circassian fashion*" meant; but in case my readers do not, I may refer them to the history of nearly a century's war between the Russians and Circassians. Applying the case to ourselves, let us suppose that our fathers were thriving farmers in Devonshire, that the Welsh, wishing to possess their lands and meeting with resistance, had murdered not only them, but our mothers, sisters, and brothers, some of them sucking infants, with every circumstance of the most wanton cruelty; supposing too that instead of being brought up in the precepts of the religion of "peace and goodwill," we only knew one similar to that of the Israelites, whose positive duty it was to slay and utterly destroy the heathen: should we then, I say,



with the vision fresh in our minds of those sisters and brothers, the innocent playfellows of our childhood, murdered before our eyes—when moreover we ourselves had been driven from our dearly loved homes to a strange land, and followed across the sea to that fostering land by our ruthless enemies—should we, when an opportunity of revenge offered itself, have shown much more mercy than did the Circassians on this occasion? This is a question I leave to the Philo-Russians of England, if they can put themselves in imagination in the place of this persecuted race, which, modern history tells us, before Russia cast a covetous eye on their thriving homesteads, was a peaceful pastoral people. For it is beyond dispute that the Circassian, such as we find him in the present day, is the produce of 100 years of ruthless war against the most unscrupulous enemy.

If any apology could suffice for the guilt of which we saw the evidence on the glacis of Telliche, it was being furnished at the very same moment that those cruelties were being performed, and at not three miles' distance, at Gorni Dubnek, which post the Russians



had that day taken. But this is to anticipate : I will tell this story when I come to it, leaving my impartial readers to cast the balance between Christians and Mohammedans.

The next day, the 26th, Dr. MacKellar took his departure for Orkhanie, *en route* for England, his engagements as surgeon to St. Thomas's Hospital imperatively demanding his return.



## CHAPTER XV.

Our table and chairs—A rather uncomfortable situation—Under a rain of splinters of shell—Explosion of shell at close quarters—Village built of mud—Russian breach of the Geneva Convention—A sudden lull—The Pasha's surrender—M. Lorando's proposal—Our doubts on the Russian mode of treating their prisoners—Contrast between the conqueror and the conquered—A very polite Russian officer, who was formerly Ignatieff's secretary—His military career—Fearfully mangled gunners—Courage of the Turkish soldiers—The mistakes of Chefket Pasha.

On the morning of the 28th October we were sitting at breakfast, round a table, which we had extemporized out of a shutter of the village mosque, nailed on to a barrel, with four smaller barrels for seats, congratulating ourselves upon this luxury, not having enjoyed a table for some time, and upon our general prospects of comfort, with our stores of tea, sugar, potted meats, three bottles of rum,



half a sheep hanging in the larder, and were planning a raid to come off that night against an enormous flock of pigeons, whose roosting-place we had discovered in the roof of one of the deserted houses of the village, when suddenly a shell burst over our cottage, and we were brought back from our visions of peace and comfort to the realities of war by the melancholy sound of the splinters as they hurtled through the air over our heads, and pitched in the roof of a house a few doors from us. This was quickly followed by another and another, and in a few seconds it was evident that an attack had commenced upon our post.

I instantly gave orders for the things to be packed and loaded in the arabas, and our horses to be saddled. Lending a hand ourselves, in half an hour our stores were packed, and under a rain of splinters of shell, we sallied from our cottage to the main street of the village, which was also the main road. Here we took up our position outside the khan, and in a few minutes, forgetting perforce our own danger, were busy in attending to the wounded men who were pouring in fast,



the road all round us meanwhile being ploughed by the splinters of shells. Once or twice we were covered with the dust caused by the explosion of a shell. One of these ugly visitors fell about a yard from us, and if the fuse had been good for anything, I should not have been writing these memoirs at the present moment, but it buried itself in the hedge, covering me with dust, and never exploded.

The Russian batteries were in position on three sides of the village, and we were exposed to the cross-fire of no less than ninety-six pieces of artillery. There was no shelter to be found anywhere, for the village was only built of mud, and it might as well have been of paper. However, we moved into the khan, where at any rate we were out of sight, leaving our horses in the yard, one of which, Dr. Vachell's, was wounded by a splinter of shell. But here the splinters came into the rooms where we were dressing the wounded. Thinking that, perhaps, the small flag of the Red Crescent could not be seen, we hung out the large one. This, however, was the signal for a battery opposite us to



turn its six guns upon us, and we had so warm a time of it that we found it necessary to tell off one of the party to watch this battery. When it fired the word "down" was given, and we all threw ourselves on our faces by our patients: this alone saved us. From the wounded now coming in, we heard that things were going badly for our side; the whole of our four guns were dismounted, and the gunners killed; and presently we saw the horses of one of these guns, all greys, without the gun, passing down the main street of the village, and covered with blood.

The Russians would not deliver the assault; and the Turks, waiting as usual for them to come within point-blank range of their rifles, had not fired a shot, although an English marksman could have picked off the Russian gunners, and compelled them to take their guns farther back, which meant out of sight, for the nature of the ground was such that they had to place them within 1000 yards of the breastworks. Where we were we could plainly see the men standing by the guns going through the loading. At about four p.m. there was a sudden lull. After a few



minutes the Turkish cavalry came galloping through the village, with the cry, "The Pasha has surrendered."

M. Lorando proposed that we should mount our horses, and fly with the cavalry. Nothing was easier, for the road in rear was open, and two seconds would have placed us in the middle of the fugitives. But we had our duty to do. We had been left to succour the wounded, and must stand by them at any personal risk. After seeing the way the Turks treated those who fell into their hands, Lorando expected a similar fate from the Russians; and I confess I had my doubts, whether, had the place been taken by storm, we might not have been slaughtered all the more readily for the badge we had on our arm, which an ignorant Cossack would probably not connect with that of the Red Cross, especially after the way in which our flag had drawn the fire. I had reason before many days to repent that we had not followed Lorando's suggestion; and had we known the treatment we were to receive, and which (as I write this, in the ancient city of Novgorod, a prisoner of war) I am still receiving, we should have been



justified in making our escape while we could.

The Russian infantry, the guards, were now seen advancing by companies from all sides; and in a few minutes the Turks were fallen in, and their arms thrown on the ground. Our work ought now to begin. Taking the brancards from the arabas, we managed, between ourselves, the arabagees, and our servants, to carry them up to the top of the hill. Here we found Hakki Pasha, standing on a rise just inside the line of earthworks, surrounded by what was left of his staff and officers, about five in all, while outside the work, a few yards from him, were General Gourko and his staff, all mounted on magnificent horses over sixteen hands high. The contrast between the rival generals was most striking. The Turk, crest-fallen and vanquished, with his small following of officers in their battle-stained, tattered uniforms, looked the personification of a beaten foe; while Gourko and his numerous staff in their brilliant uniforms represented a lady's idea of the pomp and circumstance of glorious war, for these dandy guardsmen in their



polished boots, laced coats, and kid gloves, looked as if fresh from a St. Petersburg ball-room.

Going straight up to General Gourko, I addressed him thus in French, "General, will you have the goodness to give me a party of guardsmen to remove the wounded?"

The General, most politely acceding to my request, ordered thirty guardsmen to be turned over to me. I then directed Vachell and Douglas to dress the wounded where they lay, when I would carry them off on stretchers. At this point a Russian officer, in Cossack uniform, with four crosses on his breast, two gold and two silver, seeing I was not getting on very fast with my party, as I could not speak Russian nor they English, came up and addressed me in English. He gave directions to the men to yoke such of the bullocks as were still left alive, to the empty arabas, and to transfer the men to these. He accompanied me himself to the hospital, and very kindly placed a sentry over our baggage and horses, which otherwise we should never have seen again.

This affable, humane officer turned out to



be Prince Tsérétélew, who had been General Ignatieff's Secretary at Constantinople, and had accompanied him to London, when, as *Punch* put it, the general came to consult Professor Derby as to what he had in his eye. Prince Tsérétélew had thrown up his diplomatic appointment on the outbreak of the war, and joined a Cossack regiment, himself a Georgian, as a private soldier. He very quickly and deservedly worked his way up to the rank which he then held, *Officier d'Ordonnance* to General Gourko. It was he who as a sergeant dashed into Tirnova at the head of his men and took the place by a *coup-de-main*.

In visiting the work to pick up the wounded, I was able to see the fearful havoc which the fire of the Russian artillery had made. The parapet in front of where each Turkish gun had been posted was reduced to about two feet in height, the gun-carriages were in splinters; the gunners were all lying dead by the guns, their bodies fearfully mangled, and some partly buried under the earth of which the parapet had been formed. The precision of the Russian fire, the artillery of the Guard, must have been magnificent; but



from the first the result was only too inevitable, the fire of ninety-six well-served nine-pounders of course immediately silenced the four six-pounders which were all the work possessed. The Turkish soldiers passively sustained the terrific fire which these guns kept up for five hours. To the Russian gunners, having the advantage of not being fired at in return, the affair was simply a bit of pretty artillery practice ; to the poor Turks, who were being practised upon, it was carnage. And yet out of all that force of 4000 men, not one left the breastwork unless wounded. There was no carrying off of the wounded by his comrades ; this is forbidden in the Turkish army ; and those who found their way to us were those only who, wounded in the upper part of the body, were able to walk to us without assistance. We could get nobody to carry the brancards until, when the affair was over, General Gourko kindly gave us the Russian soldiers.

The grand mistake with regard to all these posts designed by Chefket Pasha to keep open the road to Plevna, and supposed to be fortified under his directions, was that they



were not really fortified at all. The post at Telliche was strong enough to withstand the attack of infantry, but not the fire of artillery. I may here mention that, in my humble opinion, a grand mistake is made in these hastily constructed field-works in placing the ditch outside; it is not big enough or deep enough to stop the rush of a storming party. The same amount of labour, expended on sinking a trench inside and throwing the earth outside, would have made Telliche tenable until reinforcements came up. The guns, instead of being defended by a bank over which they fired, would have been sunk into the solid ground, and would have fired through embrasures. They would have been comparatively safe from the horizontal fire brought against them, and could have easily depressed their fire so as to be available against infantry when close up to the work: whereas, placed as they were, their fire passed over the assailants' heads.

The ordinary objection to this method could not be urged in this case, since the rain-water which would collect in the trench inside had a fall towards the rear.



It is probable that the capitulation of Ismail Hakki Pasha was unavoidable: it certainly saved a great expenditure of human life; yet had Osman Pasha or some other Turkish generals been in his position, they might have held out, and perhaps forced General Gourko to deliver an assault; and if this had been repulsed at first—as it not improbably might have been—Chefket Pasha, who was known to be on the march from Orkhanie<sup>1</sup> with 15,000 men, might have made his appearance the next morning. The conduct of the last-mentioned general at any rate cannot be too contemptuously censured. He is the same man who made himself so notorious in the Bulgarian atrocities, and who, to satisfy England, was banished to Bagdad. He was recalled, however, on the outbreak of the war, having the reputation of being a good general, a reputation he has now certainly forfeited. The posts were sufficiently well chosen, and near enough to one another for the purpose of mutual support, but he should have re-

<sup>1</sup> I have learnt since that Chefket Pasha remained with his force inactive the whole of the 28th at Gabrovitza, about four miles from Telliche.



mained on the ground to see them properly fortified and garrisoned, instead of keeping his 15,000 men and six batteries of guns unemployed at Orkhanie. If he did not feel himself strong enough to advance against Loftcha, he should have divided this force amongst the different half-finished forts and fortified them in a workmanlike manner, instead of leaving them as so many traps for the gallant soldiers who defended them.



## CHAPTER XVI.

Capture of Gorni Dubnek—The turn of the war—Achmed Hefzi Pasha—Russian barbarity—Osman Pasha's communications cut—Chefket Pasha's infatuation—How Osman Pasha might have imperilled General Gourko's army—The Turks want a good general-in-chief—Each general has been working for his own interests—Has Osman Pasha read the history of any of the great strategists?—General Gourko—He promises we shall be sent to Rahova—Prince Tsérétélew: "We do not intend to allow Turkey the appointment of her own gendarmes."

It was now that we first learned the grave disaster which had befallen the Turkish arms in the loss of Gorni Dubnek, taken by the Russians on the 24th October. This was the fight of which I had heard the cannonade at seven in the morning of that day, while the search was being made for my missing stirrup-leather. Gorni Dubnek is only three miles from Plevna, being the first post on the



Orkhanie road, and the same distance from Telliche, which is consequently six miles from Plevna. The position of Gorni Dubnek, if properly fortified, would have been an admirable one. It consists of a plateau on the summit of a hill, over which the road runs. But here again there had been great remissness. There was a sort of breastwork round the crest of the hill on three sides, but the fourth was quite unprotected. The Russian batteries took up positions around the doomed place, and, after a bombardment of some hours, the guards advanced to the assault, but were again and again repulsed by the heroes who held it. Achmed Hefzi Pasha, the brave commandant, an Albanian, held out till five in the evening, in constant expectation of succour from either Plevna or Telliche, and only when his men had fired their last round of ammunition did he think of surrender. He then called his officers together, and appealed to them whether under the desperate circumstances there was any other alternative. It was obvious that there was none. Accordingly the white shirt of the Hungarian surgeon was attached to a



pole and displayed by way of a flag of truce. This gentleman, whom I met afterwards in Russia, gave me an account of this most gallant defence, which only wanted a successful issue to be reckoned one of the noblest exploits of the war. He assured me the Russians continued to fire on the Turks for some time after the surrender, and even after the works were in their hands, and further that they were guilty of an act of gross barbarity in setting fire to the Turkish lines, consisting of huts built of the dry branches of trees, thus burning alive many wounded who lay within them.

The gallant band which held, against enormous odds of men and guns, this half-fortified post from seven a.m. to five p.m. consisted of 3250 infantry and 250 cavalry, more than two-thirds of whom were killed or wounded. Aided, however, by the advantage of position the garrison inflicted a loss on their assailants of more than their own total strength. Russian officers themselves bore generous testimony to the extraordinary tenacity with which Achmed Hefzi still clung to his charge, long after his surrender would have been



justified. Had he received the support he was entitled to expect from Telliche, and still more from Plevna, the disasters which afterwards came in quick succession upon the Turkish arms might have been long delayed, if not altogether averted.

On the same day a force of four battalions of the Russian Guard and two batteries of horse artillery had been moved towards Telliche. Russian officers state that this demonstration was intended only to repress any attempt that might be made on the part of the Telliche garrison to afford succour to Gorni Dubnek in its extremity, but that the battalions of the Guard newly arrived from Russia, and burning to distinguish themselves, could not be restrained, and so converted, without orders, what was meant as a mere feint into a real and fierce attack. Be this as it may, two separate and very determined attacks were made upon Telliche, which were repelled with severe loss to the Russians. Perhaps Hakki Pasha should have pushed his advantage, followed the retiring enemy, and endeavoured to effect a diversion in favour of Achmed Hefzi; but I am not in



a position to say confidently that he ought to have done so. It is possible that his numerical strength was inadequate for this. But I confess myself unable to comprehend why Osman Pasha made no attempt to save an outwork of such importance as Gorni Dubnek.

A sortie in force from Plevna would have placed a portion of the Russian force beleaguering Gorni Dubnek between two fires, and Osman Pasha might have inflicted a disaster instead of suffering one: for the loss of Gorni Dubnek did prove an irreparable disaster. The first arch of his bridge of safety was thus broken down. His communication with Orkhanie was severed. His line of retreat was cut. It is true that, on the following day, when it was too late, when Gorni Dubnek had fallen, he made in vain the effort to recover the lost position which would have sufficed abundantly to preserve it. But by that time the Russians had established themselves too solidly in the post of vantage to be dislodged. I cannot but therefore attribute to Osman Pasha, gallant soldier and capable commander as he was,



the blame in great part of his own ruin. His excuse would probably be that he considered the onus, of maintaining the line of communication secure, to rest upon the relieving forces under Chefket Pasha. There might be justice in this argument as regards Telliche and all the links in the chain between that post and Orkhanie, but hardly, I think, with reference to Gorni Dubnek, a place under his own eyes, only three miles from Plevna, of which it might almost be considered an outwork.

If, however, the illustrious Osman Pasha showed himself at this critical period somewhat remiss, Chefket Pasha was absolutely infatuated. There can be no doubt that, if he was really too weak to retake Gorni Dubnek at once, and so re-establish the broken communication, he should have lost no time in withdrawing the garrison of Telliche, and of all the other posts on the Orkhanie road, to his own main body. These little garrisons were all too weak to be left to their own resources, while, as reinforcements, they would have been invaluable to himself. At that period Chefket Pasha would have



had no difficulty in acquainting Osman Pasha with his conduct and its reasons. The latter would thus have been under no delusion as to the probability of relief, and could be guided, by his knowledge of the supplies remaining within Plevna, in judging of the expediency of evacuating the position which he had so bravely and so usefully held.

The occupation of Gorni Dubnek by the Russians would no doubt have embarrassed Osman Pasha somewhat in the process of evacuation and the commencement of his retreat, but not seriously. During the whole of October and for some days in November the Russians had no forces to the west and south-west of Plevna capable of effectually obstructing the march of Osman Pasha at the head of 40,000 good troops.

In fact, during those days, Osman Pasha might have done much more than secure his own safety; he might have gravely imperilled that of General Gourko. Chefket Pasha's army, reinforced by the garrisons of the posts along the Orkhanie road, which I am supposing him to have called in, would have amounted at least to 25,000 regular



troops. With such a force, occupying a strong position in front of Orkhanie, before him, and Osman Pasha (assuming the latter to have got clear away from Plevna) only a march or two in his rear, and on his line of communication, Gourko's situation would have been extremely critical, and what is now praised in him as enterprise would have been censured as temerity. At any rate, the junction of Osman Pasha with Chefket at Orkhanie, while Mehemet Ali was gathering together a considerable reserve army at Sofia, would have made the passage of the Western Balkans impossible to the Russians for this season.

Thus, in two days' fighting, Turkey lost at Gorni Dubnek and Telliche 7500 men and eight guns, and, what was of more importance, the command of the road to Plevna, the fall of which now only became a question of time.

But the really wise plan of campaign would have been an advance upon Loftcha, which would have rendered the Russian attack upon Gorni Dubnek impossible: this would have been like advancing a pawn, in chess, to



defend a bishop by threatening your adversary's queen.

The great want of the Turks in this war has been a good general-in-chief, to lay out a comprehensive plan of campaign, and with sufficient authority placed in his hands to enforce obedience from the commanders of *corps-d'armée*. From want of this strong hand at the head of the Turkish army, the many admirable chances, which the egregious blunders of the Russian generals have given, have been thrown away. From the want of a preconcerted plan of action, each Turkish general has been acting after his own lights, on his own responsibility. His ambition prompting him to consider more the success of his own immediate operations than that of the whole campaign, he has rather rejoiced when his rival, perhaps from his own want of support, has failed. This has been the simple history of Suleiman Pasha's attacks upon Shipka; and if this general had been in the English service, he would, I should hope, have been tried by court-martial. It is also the history of the want of success of Mehemet Ali. Had Suleiman, instead of



sacrificing 20,000 of the best soldiers of Turkey by hurling them against Shipka, left that force to mask it, and advanced with the remainder of his army to join hands with Mehemet Ali, who was constantly urging him to do so, they would have been strong enough (for this was before the arrival of the Russian Guard) to have advanced upon the Czarewitch, driven him back upon the Grand Duke, already with his hands full at Plevna, or else into the Danube. They would have cut the Russian line of communication by destroying the bridges, perhaps have forced the surrender of the Grand Duke and Czarewitch, possibly even taken the Russian Emperor prisoner (who was then in Tirnova), and finished the campaign at a blow! The least result, of even the threat of such a movement, whether it had been entirely successful or not, would have been the evacuation by the Russians of their position in the Shipka, without the loss of a Turkish soldier. But Mehemet Ali was a German; the Turks were jealous of him; and although the only general who has shown himself to possess the least idea of strategy, he was displaced



from the command of the army of Shumla, to make room for his rival, Suleiman, who instead ought to have been superseded, if not degraded.

The Turks are hard hitters, but no strategists ; nor have they many educated soldiers in their army. The famous Osman himself is hardly an exception. He has proved himself a determined soldier, possessed of all the proverbial obstinacy of the Turk, a man to be depended upon to hold an important post with bull-dog tenacity to the last. He appears even to have had some faint glimmering of strategy when he advanced and seized Plevna. Had there been another like himself at Nicopolis, instead of the man who surrendered that important post, and had he himself retained his hold on Loftcha, his position at Plevna would have been very strong. But as it was, Plevna was bound eventually to be isolated, and could only serve for a time to detain the right wing of the Russian army. I consider that Osman Pasha had it in his power to have greatly delayed the fall of Plevna by making a sortie on the 24th



October, to support Gorni Dubnek. He must have heard the firing from seven o'clock a.m. till five o'clock p.m. If Ismael Hakki Pasha, again, after the repulse of the attack of the Young Guard upon Telliche, could have followed up the fugitives and taken the attacking party at Gorni Dubnek upon the other flank, there cannot be a doubt that, after the heroic defence made by Achmed Hefzi Pasha, that unfortunate post might have been held until a demonstration was made in its favour from Orkhanie. Then, in a few days, a sufficient supply of provisions would have been thrown into Plevna to enable it to stand a winter's siege. The history of the sufferings of the Russians in such a siege would have thrown those of our army before Sebastopol, in the winter of 1854, completely into the shade.

There is little use, however, in regretting the "might have beens," or in speculating on the great results which might have followed if apparently small matters had been differently managed. I will return, therefore, to my petty personal narrative.

After placing the first load of wounded in



the khan, I returned with the empty arabas for a second, passing on my way General Gourko and his staff. As the general rode down the hill to the village he was cheered enthusiastically by his men. When I reached the batteries I found Vachell and Douglas in custody of the gendarmes of the Guard, a picked body of men in a becoming blue uniform. Douglas complained that one of these men had struck him, and pointed the particular fellow out. I reported this to a Russian officer who happened to be passing, and he at once reprimanded the man severely. This officer's back, however, was hardly turned when the man directed his attentions to me. He abused me and the English army and navy and nation in the most savage and circumstantial way, and (though the man was only a private) in very good French. Lorando and I were now taken in charge by these same gendarmes, and formally constituted prisoners. A few minutes afterwards General Gourko re-passed us within a few yards, and I ventured to appeal to him for information as to what was likely to be our fate. He answered courteously enough that we should be sent to



Rahova, a town on the Danube in Turkish hands, and there set free. We were then handed over to the charge of a Russian officer who spoke French. He conducted us, with our two arabas of luggage and stores, to the village of Dubnek, where we were lodged for the night in a hut under a guard of a dozen soldiers. The revolvers of my three friends were here taken from them, which revolvers, by-the-bye, have, I believe, never been returned. I myself was quite unarmed, and a similar process was therefore superfluous with regard to me. The next morning, the 29th, Prince Tsérétélew came round to our hut, and politely invited us to breakfast at the mess of General Gourko's staff. I cannot say the meal was a pleasant one, but we had no lack of courtesy or even kindness to complain of. There were several staff officers present at this breakfast, and the conversation turned on the new gendarmerie force which I told them the Sultan, in accordance with the suggestions made at the Conference, intended to organize, and of which I had already been appointed an inspector, Baker Pasha's scheme having received his sanction before the decla-



ration of war. Prince Tsérétélew remarked, "But we don't intend to allow Turkey to have the appointment of her own gendarmerie."

"By what right," said I, "will you presume to interfere with the internal administration of a free country?"

"By the right of conquest," drily replied the prince.



## CHAPTER XVII.

Our captivity commences—We reach Bogot—The Grand Duke Nicholas—He is an accomplished linguist—His examination—"Have you any papers?"—A very miserable night—I find Lorando is also a prisoner—Sir Henry Havelock addresses me—Our horses are sold—A bad bargain—We reach Poradin—The *Commandant de place*—Two francs for a small loaf—"Pashaw"—Bakshish understood—Magical effect of it on our guard—The village school—We are joined by a Turkish captain—He was taken while carrying despatches from Osman to Chefket Pasha—He puts to flight a Russian picket—He intends to escape—I ride in triumph through Sistova—The Bulgarians throw mud at me—The Danube—How did the Russians cross here?

AFTER breakfast we mounted our horses by direction of one of our entertainers, and were committed to the charge of an escort of Cossacks of the Guard commanded by an officer who spoke French. After riding all day, making a half-circuit of the works of Plevna,



we reached, about five o'clock in the afternoon, the village of Bogot, where we were halted outside the tent of the Grand Duke Nicholas. Here we waited for fully two hours, shivering in the cold, till seven p.m. At last one by one we were ushered into the Grand Duke's tent. There were sitting, one on the right hand of his Imperial Highness, the other on his left, M. Nelidow and the great Todleben. I was placed, standing, directly opposite the Grand Duke, and had plenty of opportunity of examining the exterior of my judge before he commenced his interrogatories. The Grand Duke Nicholas is tall, strongly built and soldierly in person, but with no indication of capacity, and certainly none of refinement in his countenance. His forehead is narrow, his glance fierce, but without penetration: his features are altogether rather coarsely and commonly moulded; and, above all, there is in his manner a want of that calmness and (so to say) security which we associate with the possession of supreme rank and unquestioned authority. There is something of what I must call *bluster* about him. His *brusquerie*, however, sometimes relaxes. After a sentence



pronounced in an almost brutal tone, the next will be courteous and almost caressing. He is at any rate an accomplished linguist, and it added to the discomfort, not to say humiliation, of my position that I felt myself so much his inferior in that respect. He began his interrogatory in French, and pushed it closely and severely. In fact I saw I was on my trial before a not over-well-disposed judge ; and, since I was doing my case injustice by a want of nicety and precision in my replies, I begged for the aid of an English-speaking interpreter. Upon this the Grand Duke himself at once addressed me in excellent English, and continued the examination with perfect ease and fluency in the same language.

“ You are one of the gendarmerie organized by Colonel Baker ? ”

“ Yes, your Imperial Highness.”

“ How came you to be with an ambulance ? ”

“ The new gendarmerie existing only on paper, I sought for some work to do, and was sent by Mr. Layard to relieve the refugee Turkish and Bulgarian women in the neighbourhood of Philippopolis. Ambulance No. 5 of the Red Crescent happening to pass through



Philippopolis just as I had finished my work in that district, I offered my services to it, and was appointed *chef de brancardiers*."

"Have you any papers?"

"No; my passport was lost at Kezanlik."

"Then you are a colonel in the Turkish army?"

"No; my appointment is a civil one. I hold only a legal contract with the Police Minister, and no commission."

"That makes no difference; you have no papers. Your chief, Baker Pasha, has taken command of the Turkish cavalry, and is causing us great annoyance."

"But your Highness can inquire of Mr. Layard, our ambassador at Constantinople, who will assure you that I have not borne arms against Russia."

"I have no need to do that. I am satisfied in my own mind that you have told me the truth, because Hakki Pasha's statement bears out your own. But you have no papers, therefore we are justified in only looking upon you as a Turkish officer." Then quite fiercely, "You are taken prisoner in plain clothes with the badge of the Geneva Con-



vention on your arm, which you have no right to wear. And yet you are a colonel in the Turkish army! There is only one interpretation we can put upon that."

He then looked me savagely in the face for a space of fully two minutes. I kept silence from an impression that speech irritated him, and endeavoured to sustain his angry gaze with as much respectful firmness as possible; but the vision of a squad of Russian soldiers with levelled rifles, and of a widow and seven children, flashed painfully through my brain. It was clear he wished to mistake me for a Turkish spy. After these minutes of silence, which seemed to me very long, he resumed,—

"Have you served in the English army?"

"Yes, your Highness."

"Seen service?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In the Crimea; before Sebastopol."

"Where was your regiment posted?"

"On Cathcart's Hill."

"You mean Green Hill?"

"Yes."



“And the Turkish army is full of ex-officers of the British army?”

“I was not aware of it.”

“You will go a prisoner to Russia, where you will remain till the end of the war. Take that brassard off your arm.”

“May I see Colonel Wellesley?”

“No.”

The officer in charge untied the brassard from my arm and handed it to his Imperial Highness. I was then marched out between two Russian sentries. As I passed the party outside, Douglas attempted to speak to me, but was prevented doing so.

I was taken to a small *tente d'abri* which was already occupied by four Russian soldiers, and with these men, and lying on damp straw, I spent one of the most miserable nights of my life. Sleep I could not. I could only lie and think of what would become of my wife and children, if the war lasted.

The next morning my saddle-bags were taken away and searched. I was then allowed to go outside the tent, and walk ten paces up and down, though with a sentry over me. While taking this exercise I saw,



a few tents off, Lorando in apparently exactly the same position as myself. He was not near enough, however, to speak to. Why was he treated so? They could not say *he* was a Turkish officer. I am afraid, however, I felt a selfish consolation in finding that I was not alone in my trouble.

In the course of the day, an Englishman rode up to me and said,—

“Are you an Englishman?”

“Yes,” I replied. “Who are you?”

At this moment the sentry made a gesture of prohibition, and the stranger rode away. I afterwards learned that this was Sir Henry Havelock, then acting as the *Times*' correspondent at the Grand Duke's headquarters. I watched hopefully for his return all that day and part of the next, but in vain. He never made, so far as I am aware, any further attempt to communicate with me; and if he possessed the influence with the Grand Duke for which he has taken credit, I can only say that he did not exert it in my favour.<sup>1</sup>

While lying in the *tente d'abri* I managed to write an appeal to the Grand Duke to be

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.



allowed to see our Military Attaché, Colonel Wellesley, who was then with the Emperor at Poradin, ten miles distant. I sent a letter also to my wife, which I begged might be despatched, informing her of my situation, and advising her to apply to a friend in London, who would introduce her at the Foreign Office.

At about ten o'clock on the 31st the commandant of the place came to my tent and told me to prepare to march in an hour. He invited me in the meanwhile to his hut, where he gave me a cup of tea and some biscuit. He advised me to sell my horse, as the forage on the road, he said, would cost more than I should get for the horse himself at Fratesti. Presently Lorando was brought in, and then Dr. Vachell, who told us that Douglas was very ill. He said that they had both dined with the Grand Duke the night before, and been treated in every respect with the greatest civility. They had since been conducted over the hospitals, and invited by the Russians to transfer their services to them. They were hesitating, he added, as to whether they would do so or not.



We were afterwards taken into the farmyard at the back of the Grand Duke's quarters, where our horses were trotted out before the officers of the head-quarter staff for sale. I disposed of mine with saddle and bridle for 6*l.*—he had cost me 19*l.* ; and Lorando sold his for 5*l.*, without the saddle. We had a mule belonging to the ambulance, which Lorando intended to keep and ride, as he was not strong enough to walk. I resigned myself to go on foot, as money was an object to me. We then started on our dreary march in the silent rain, with a party of about thirty Turkish prisoners, whom I had observed from my tent, squatting huddled together in a circle in the mud to keep themselves warm. One of these poor fellows was quite unfit to move. He was coughing up blood, and looked already like death. If we had not given him a seat on our araba, he would have died on that day's march.

On we trudged, at the rate of two miles an hour, through the heavy mud and in a steady rain.

About six p.m. we reached Poradin, where the Emperor was living, though of course we



saw nothing of his Majesty. Just as it was dark the *commandant de place* made his appearance, and assigned us a Bulgarian cottage in which to sleep. This commandant spoke French well, and proved a kind-hearted fellow. He treated us as gentlemen, and took Lorando off with him to the camp restaurant. I, however, knowing what camp prices usually are, and needing to husband my resources, preferred to stay where I was. Nor did I fare badly on a tin of *bouilli*, which had formed part of the ambulance stores, and was one of the very few articles which the soldiers of our different guards had not thought it worth while to appropriate.

I must in justice state that we were granted a subsistence-allowance of two francs a day each. This may seem a sufficiently liberal allowance to prisoners; but, as a small loaf cost precisely that sum, it was in reality very inadequate. Moreover, I had left Constantinople—as I supposed for perhaps a three weeks' trip—with little more than a change of linen. It was evident, therefore, that it would be necessary to incur some expense in the purchase of clothes on my arrival in Russia.



All this made the narrowness of my finances a matter of anxiety.

We started from Poradin on the 1st November, about mid-day, a new guard taking us over from that which had brought us from Bogote. These men proved themselves unusually rough and brutal, even for Russian private soldiers. I was not allowed to leave the side of the araba for a yard. If I tried to pick my steps, or choose the portion of the road where the mud was less deep, I was forced back into my place with a sharp “ *Pashaw* ” (forward), and the rifle-butt of the soldier behind me thrust, by no means tenderly, into my back. At last it struck us to try what a little *bakshish* might do to soften the manners of our custodians. At a village which we passed we entrusted a five-franc piece to the corporal with the commission to buy bread for us, empowering him at the same time to retain the change. The effect was so magical that we repeated the process in one form or another, with every change of guards.

Our first proceeding on ascertaining to which squad of gentlemen we were to be



committed, was to present the corporal and four privates with a franc each for their trouble in taking care of us, besides religiously refraining from accepting change from the money given them to pay for the fodder for our buffaloes.

The scenery in all this part of Bulgaria is tame in the extreme. The land, no doubt, is very fertile, and its fertility is done justice to by diligent cultivation. The principal crop was Indian corn, the tall stalks of which still standing exhibited the vigour of the soil. This night we reached a village called Karaj, where we were unlucky in the Russian commandant on whom our fate for the night depended. Surly and contemptuous, he disdained to answer an inquiry, but tossed us over to the charge of the Bulgarian head-man with a careless gesture, which denoted that even the latter need not give himself much trouble on our behalf. Nor did he. He simply turned us into a deserted, empty, and broken-down building which in the days of Turkish rule had been the village school. It seemed to have been originally substantially built, but was now falling to ruin. Here,



without even straw to lie upon, and with no fire to warm us, we spent a very hard night indeed.

At Poradin our forlorn party had been joined by a Turkish captain, who had been taken a few days before at Gorni Dubnek, a fine, straight, soldier-like fellow, but with no possessions save what he stood up in, and scarcely enough of those to cover his nakedness. This poor fellow soon took us into his confidence. He had been carrying despatches from Osman Pasha to Chefket Pasha, and had left Plevna the night of the fall of Gorni Dubnek, being unaware of the result of the fight there on that day, the 24th October. He gave us an account of his adventures. The first night, as he wandered about in the dark, he was suddenly brought up by the challenge of a Russian sentry. The next moment a whole picket sprang to their feet. But the nerves of this gallant follower of Islam were equal to the occasion. In a loud voice he gave the word of command to an imaginary force behind him, "Arsh, March," and the Muscovs, thinking their picket was surprised, took to their heels and left him to retrace his steps. He lay hid



in a watercourse the whole of the next day, and the following night walked calmly into Gorni Dubnek, which he supposed to be still in the hands of his countrymen. He went straight up to a party squatting round a camp-fire to get a light for a cigarette ; but, when too late, found that the men, in the midst of whom he was, wore the flat cap of the Russian Imperial Guard instead of the fez of his own countrymen. Retreat was impossible, and he gave himself up. Strange to say, he still had the despatches upon him when he told us his story at Karaj, and refused to destroy them, as it was, he said, his intention to take the first opportunity to escape, and he hoped yet to deliver them, though a little after date. I admired the martial spirit of this man, who was, by the bye, a native of Bagdad ; and the fortitude and resignation with which he bore his fate were truly oriental. He seemed to contract rather a fancy for me ; at least for the rest of the journey he devoted himself to me almost like a servant. Some of the new guard at Karaj were Crimean Tartars, professing his own faith and speaking his own language. His delight over these men was something to



see. He kissed them, stroked them down, called them his brothers, and was most gushing over them. I think I chiefly won his heart by giving each of *them* a packet of Turkish tobacco.

I had with me one of Wild's maps of the country between Odessa and Constantinople, in which the roads and villages are marked with a fair degree of accuracy. It was a wonder that this escaped the Russians' eyes at Bogote, where they searched me, but it was folded up in the pocket of my great-coat, and into that they happened not to look. I used to follow our road on it, laying it boldly before our guards, who were either too stupid to know the use I might make of it, or too much afraid of losing their *bakshish* to make any objection. The *usebashi* (captain) used to beg me to trace on the map the route we were taking, and I did so over and over again. I explained to him that any attempt to escape in Bulgaria would be hopeless, as we were passing through the heart of the district occupied by the Russians, where his decided Turkish, or rather Arab type and martial bearing would betray him



to the first Bulgarian he met. His best chance, I thought, would be to get away to the Austrian frontier, where the Austrian line joins the Jassi railway between Roman and Tirgu Formos, at a place called Pascani, which, as I showed him, could only be a walk of about thirty miles—a distance easily accomplished in a night. I used to give him instruction at night, when the stars were out, in shaping his course by them, and after several lessons got him to understand how to find the north star. I explained to him that on leaving Pascani his course would be north-north-west, and that therefore he would have to keep the north star on his right front, never crossing the line of rails, which he would always have on his right hand.

November 2nd, we left Karaj at about one p.m., and it was pitch dark before we arrived at Bulgareni. For the last mile or two we were off the track which did duty as road. I went floundering about in the dark into holes and over banks. The corporal of our guard seemed anxious, for the night was as black as ink. Just at this point I heard



whispered into my ear by the *usebashi*, "Ef-fendi, now I will go," and it took all my persuasion to keep him from doing so. No doubt he would easily have got away for that night, but would infallibly have been recaptured in the morning, as he had not the faintest idea of how to find his way, and would have been as likely to head for the Danube as for the Balkans.

At Bulgareni we were lodged in the village wine shop, and spent the night in very rough company. The one room the house boasted was crowded with soldiers, who at first were very noisy, until with their skins full of the host's vile liquor they had stupefied themselves into a drunken sleep.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

I make a public entry into Sistova—Not a triumphal one—My crime in the eyes of the Bulgarians—Curs—The military position of Sistova—Abdul Kerim—Sirdar *à la crème*—His “plan”—The cause of Turkey’s fall—Gallantry and devotion of her soldiers—Jealousy of foreigners—Hobart and Baker Pashas—The words of the former verified—The evil genius of Turkey.

FROM Bulgareni (Nov. 3rd), a rather long march brought us to Sistova on the Danube, the point at which the Russians effected their second and principal passage of the river. When I call this day’s journey a “march,” I must avow that it was not such for me. My feet had become so intensely painful, with the laborious plodding along heavy roads for so many hours on the previous days, that I could hold out no longer, but was forced this day to mount the araba, and in this fashion I made my entry into the



town of Sistova. It was not a triumphal one, though I could not complain of any want of public attention. I think half the population of Sistova—and the population is considerable—must have lined the streets to see the English prisoner pass. I am aware that my appearance, rather dirty than otherwise, and riding in a bullock-cart, was not imposing, but I cannot consent to attribute my unflattering reception wholly to my personal disadvantages. My crime in the eyes of these grateful Bulgarians was being English. They made no secret of that. They could not know, of course, that I had lately been an agent in relieving hundreds of their countrywomen; but they should have known, and doubtless did know, that it was to the charity of England alone, among all the nations of Europe, that Bulgaria owed the rebuilding of so many villages and homesteads which had been wrecked in the “atrocities.” And accordingly they showed their sense of national obligation by hooting and reviling the first unlucky Englishman who fell in their way. I wish they had limited themselves to taunts and abuse; but



when they pelted me, as they did liberally, with lumps of dirt, it was only the bitterness of my contempt for the curs that enabled me to maintain as much outward serenity as I did.

Nor must it be supposed that this treatment came only from a needy and squalid populace, whose own chronic wretchedness might partly excuse their exultation at the degradation of their superiors in station. I was quite surprised at the evidences of well-being among the great mass of the people. Very few were otherwise than warmly and amply dressed, while a great many seemed from their costume to be in considerable affluence; and these were not more amiably disposed towards me than the rest.

My experience, therefore, of Sistova did not tend to change my previous impression of the Bulgarians of Bulgaria proper—that they are not a pleasant people, and that they are, both in stature and physiognomy, inferior to their kindred of Roumelia. It may be true that the vices of slaves are to be in chief part debited to their tyrants, and that



the ungenerous insolence of the Sistovans is the natural recoil from the servility they had to exhibit towards their Ottoman lords. But is it proved that, at Sistova for instance, the Turks did really exercise any oppression whatever on the Bulgarians? The appearance of the town itself, or of its inhabitants, gives no presumption that way. The people were manifestly not so oppressed but that they were allowed to get rich. All the best houses and all the conspicuous public buildings were Greek, not Moslem, structures. It is true that, so far as dwellings were concerned, it was not easy for me to draw the comparison, inasmuch as the Bulgarians had profited by the retreat of the Turkish troops to sack and ruin the whole Turkish quarter. But I could see one side of the question very satisfactorily. The Bulgarian dwellings were uninjured, and showed a high average of comfort. There are in Sistova no fewer than six or seven large Greek churches, and a cathedral which may without exaggeration be called vast. The Turks at any rate were singular tyrants, to allow their slaves a luxury and ostentation which most races in a posi-



tion of domination would have considered at once an insult and a temptation.

Turning from the internal features of Sistova to its military position, I was greatly struck by its advantages for defence against an enemy attempting to force the passage of the river. It is wonderful—and, indeed, only explicable by the theory that Abdul Kerim, in prosecution of his famous “plan” (of which I shall have more to say hereafter), attached no idea of disadvantage to a Russian passage of the river at this point—that no greater force than two weak battalions should have been prepared to resist an attack here. A much greater force might have been ultimately unable to repel it; but with the extraordinary advantage of the position an adequate garrison at Sistova might have inflicted an almost crippling loss upon the invaders. On the Turkish side of the river the banks rise high, almost into cliffs. On the Roumanian side, towards Simnitza, it is a dead flat, unprotected by a bush, a bed of osiers, or even a tuft of grass. Even under the circumstance (of which of course the Russians were well aware) of the Ottomans



being in no great strength, the passage of the river was a daring feat, and that it was effected with such comparatively trifling loss is matter of astonishment.

I have alluded to Abdul Kerim's "plan," on which at first such hopes were built, and on which such ridicule was thrown at last. Indeed, it came to be doubted whether the Sirdar Ekrem (or Sirdar *à la crème*, as the wits of Constantinople called him, in allusion to his supposed gluttony in sweetmeats), had really any plan at all; or whether, if he had one, it was not simply a plan for a colossal act of treason. The indolence of Abdul Kerim was as indisputable as his great age. He had formerly, however, given proofs of considerable military talents, and there was no suspicion that advancing years had impaired his intellectual vigour. For my own part, I am disposed to believe that Abdul Kerim really had a strategical scheme, and, what is more, that that scheme was essentially a sound one. In my view, Abdul Kerim was comparatively indifferent as to the passage of the Danube, because he knew it could not be always and everywhere



resisted. I am disposed to think that he did not even attach great weight to the defence of the Balkans. I think he would not have been sorry to see the Russians spread themselves over Western Bulgaria, perhaps even over much of Roumelia. The farther they ventured from their base of operations, Roumania, and the longer their lines of communication were drawn out, the better for his design. I think his "plan" was essentially the same as Osman Pacha's actual conduct, only that he would have executed it on a larger scale, and from a securer basis. The Quadrilateral would have been his Plevna: equally threatening to the Russian communications, and always secure of supplies of men, provisions, and munitions of war by way of Varna. I guess all this from the Sirdar Ekrem's negligence with regard to the Danube and the Balkan Passes, contrasted with his anxiety to increase his forces within the Quadrilateral, and coupled with his extreme urgency to the Seraskierate regarding the defences of Adrianople and Constantinople. I think, in short, his "plan" was to allow the Russians to work their wicked



will pretty well all over the country—the deeper they got in it the better—reserving to himself the option, at the fitting moment, of rushing in irresistible force upon their bridges and communications. The public opinion of Turkey would never have permitted this plan to be persevered in; but, otherwise, it might have been fatal to Russia.

After all, it must be said that, if Turkey has fallen, it has not been in consequence of any absolutely preponderating strength on the part of her conqueror. Her comparative weakness resulted from her own faults. It is the corruption of her Government which has (justly) been her ruin. We think too exclusively of the splendid gallantry and devotion of the Turkish soldiers, and too little of the intrigues, incompetence, and corruption of the Turkish generals and ministers. We are accustomed to say that the bravery of the Turkish soldiers all but saved the empire. This is true; but it is equally true that the treason or cowardice or stupidity of the Turkish officers, and the intrigues and corruption of the Turkish court, have quite ruined the empire. The one phenomenon is



as natural an outcome of the Turkish system as the other. The heroism and self-sacrifice of the poor Ottoman is not more the national characteristic than the indolence, selfishness, and baseness of the rich. Nothing but the vices of the Pashas could have neutralized the incomparable fighting qualities of the *nizams* and even the *redifs*. Nothing but the warlike instincts and loyal devotion of the common soldiers could so long have compensated for the folly and villany with which their blood was wasted.

Another equally inherent characteristic of the Turks has been equally influential for their misfortunes. This is their jealousy of foreigners. Hobart Pasha was kept in inaction; Baker Pasha was left idle; dozens of excellent officers—English, Polish, and Hungarian—offered their services to Turkey at the beginning of the war, only to be refused. Hobart Pasha foretold exactly the manner in which the defence of the Danube would collapse, if left in the hands to which palace intrigue and Turkish jealousy insisted on entrusting it. Mehemet Ali, the best general (taking him altogether) the Turks possessed, was dis-



trusted because he was not a Turk *pur sang*. He was twice appointed to supreme command and twice superseded through Suleiman Pasha's jealousy. Baker Pasha in command of an army would have achieved great, perhaps decisive, advantages for Turkey. Until Mehemet Ali, as the first act of his command, telegraphed an application for his aid, he was totally unemployed. I say nothing of the treason in the Palace, in the Seraskierate, at Rustchuck, at Ardahan, at Kars, probably elsewhere. As a rule the Turkish peasant is honourable, brave, chaste, sober, God-fearing, and devoted to his Sultan. As a rule the Turkish pasha is dishonourable, cowardly, licentious, without religion, or any other loyalty than servility towards the distributor of loaves and fishes. The one class is as integral an ingredient of Turkish life as the other. If the one class could almost save their common country, it was all the other could do to ruin it.

If I had to fix on one man on whom to charge pre-eminence in the evil work of ruining his country, it would be on Suleiman Pasha. His bravery I do not contest,



but it was not an unselfish, single-minded devotion like Osman Pasha's ; it was combined with all kinds of meannesses—jealousy, avarice, ambition. He has been in this war the evil genius of Turkey,—first by squandering Turkey's best troops in Montenegro, in enterprises so grossly unintelligent as to be almost idiotic ; then at the Shipka Pass ; last by his insubordinate refusal to join Mehemet Ali on the Lom.



## CHAPTER XIX.

The bridges across the Danube—How they might be destroyed—The Balaclava Jews again—"The English are so liberal with their money"—A polite naval officer—Simnitzamud—The Black Hole of Calcutta—A Russian "officer and gentleman"—Petrushan—I converse in Latin with a little girl—Contempt of the Russians for the Roumanians—We leave Fratesti—Bucharest—Nineteen hours locked in a third-class carriage—We leave Bucharest—A train of wounded—A strange funeral—The captain's plan frustrated—"Why is England supplying Turkey with money?"—"Is Osman Pasha an Englishman?"—The Russians have taken military possession of Roumania—A night on an office table—Dr. Bernstein—He obtains leave for me to stay at Kichenew.

THERE are two bridges at Sistova, one about a mile above the other. The upper one is composed entirely of wooden punts, the second is chiefly also of wood, but with some iron pontoons. A soldier is stationed as guard in every alternate punt. A constant stream of



arabas loaded with stores, and britzkas containing Roumanian store-keepers flow over these bridges. The son of the Grand Duke Nicholas passed us on the road. It is matter of wonder that no attempt has been made to destroy these bridges; I should think that it might easily have been effected by means of petroleum. I know as a fact that offers to destroy them were made by Englishmen to the Turkish Government, but the proposal was neglected with the same want of enterprise as characterized the whole management of the Turkish gun-boats on the Danube. The narrowness of the channel of the river at Sistova is caused by an island which here parts it into two streams, making a most convenient break in what, otherwise, would have been a long bridge.

The Russians are making a causeway and good road across the flat, low-lying strip of land, about two miles in length, on the Roumanian side, which has to be crossed before reaching Simnitza. This road I should think would be under water when the spring floods come, and then will be the trying time for the Russian army, if the war lasts so long.



Simnitza is in some respects curiously like Kadikoi near Balaclava. I met there several Jews, who had commenced the camp-following business at Kadikoi, and had continued it in different campaigns ever since. Some of these vultures spoke in terms of warm though hardly disinterested affection of the English.

“They were such liberal people with their money: never had we had such a harvest.”

I had here some conversation with a Russian naval officer, who seemed an intelligent as he certainly was a courteous and accomplished man—accomplished, I mean, in respect to his command of languages. I may say, by-the-by, that all the Russian naval officers I have met, without exception, speak English. I am disposed to think indeed that a knowledge of French and English is compulsory on naval officers in Russia. It is certain that association with officers of the Russian war services must strike an Englishman with humiliating surprise at their linguistic superiority to his own countrymen of the same professions. This naval officer, who quite recognized the veracity of my declaration that I had been a non-combatant in this war, and also the claim



of those to respect who had given themselves to the work of succouring the suffering and wounded, found a difficulty, nevertheless, in understanding why I had given my services to the Red Crescent instead of the Red Cross. It hardly satisfied him to urge that the Red Crescent was at my hand, and the Red Cross at a distance, or that the Turkish wounded were more unprovided with help than the Russian. He counted me an enemy still, though an enemy for whom he could feel respect.

Simnitsa possesses cafés and restaurants and some other attributes of a civilized continental town. It possesses, however, *mud* in a degree which seemed to me inconsistent with its pretensions. The highest flight, or rather the deepest plunge, of a Londoner's imagination—though Londoners imagine they know what mud is—cannot sound the abyss of the Simnitsa mud. It is true that my own discomfort indisposed me to see the place in rose.

We had been, on our arrival, conducted to a small room about twelve feet square, already tenanted by sixteen prisoners. Some of these



prisoners were common soldiers, others camp-followers. Our arrival, with the *usebashi* and our servant, brought the population of this mere cupboard up to twenty. In this hole, badly ventilated, and not affording space for all to lie down at the same time, we were imprisoned for three days and nights. I reminded myself that this was not so bad as the Black Hole of Calcutta; but I did not succeed in persuading myself that such treatment of a British officer, captured while engaged in a work of humanity, was befitting a *soi-disant* civilized government.

My first written protest to the commandant, explaining that we were gentlemen, not criminals, nor even accused of any crime, received no answer. My second elicited the verbal message—let me hope, a little disfigured in the transmission—“that the accommodation was good enough for Englishmen, and we ought to consider ourselves lucky in being where we were.” This unpleasant specimen of a Russian “officer and gentleman” proved his consistency at any rate by prohibiting our purchase of wine, and by other petty molestations, such as frustrating



our attempt to sell our araba and bullocks, which latter began to betray symptoms of giving in. One of the soldiers of our guard, a native of Riga, who spoke German, was ready to give us his assistance (for a commission) in the transaction, but the negotiation was quashed by superior authority.

While at Simnitza I saw several Turks brought in as prisoners, whose sole offence was that of being Turks. They were manifestly farmers or yeoman peasants, with nothing of the combatant whatever in their appearance. They complained, and probably with truth, that they had been peaceably occupied with their farm-work when they were seized.

We left (not the dust, but) the mud of Simnitza behind us on the 6th November, meeting on the road a gang of Italian navvies in broad-brimmed hats, who had been imported to finish the line of railway from Fratesti to Simnitza. As some Roumanian Jews, fellow-prisoners of ours, going back to Bucharest under a charge of swindling at Sistova, possessed two britzkas, we arranged with them to carry our baggage to Fratesti for



two napoleons and a half, conditionally on our selling the bullocks and araba. We did, as it happened, receive an offer of nine napoleons from some Roumanians we met on the road and gladly closed with them, although that sum was only about a quarter of the real value.

Nov. 6th. At Petrushan the commandant, who this time seemed a gentleman, listened to our protest regarding our treatment, and put us into a peasant's cottage. Here I carried on quite a conversation in Latin with a sweet little girl of seven, with blue eyes and black hair, whose confidence I gained by a stick of chocolate. This Roumanian language is in fact Latin with an admixture of Slav.

The next night (November 7th) we slept in a sort of shed, there being no military commandant apparently in the place.

On the third night after leaving Simnitza we arrived at Fratesti, where we found a camp restaurant, to which we were admitted. Some Roumanian officers—indeed, all the Roumanians with whom we held any communication—showed us the greatest politeness. It was easy to see that our disfavour



with the Russian authorities was rather a recommendation than otherwise in Roumanian eyes. The bad feeling between the two peoples cannot be denied or overlooked, and the fault lies just as manifestly with the Russians, who parade their contempt for their allies with a frankness curiously at variance with their ordinarily politic self-command. Yet the Roumanian soldiers have shown that they do not in any way deserve this contempt. For raw troops their conduct was on several occasions admirable. It did not diminish my readiness to do justice to the gallantry of the Roumanian contingent at Plevna and elsewhere, that the Roumanian officers whom I met at Fratesti showed a warm sympathy for England. One of these officers had served—I think with La Marmora's contingent—in the Crimea, and his testimony, given loudly and with enthusiasm before his comrades, to the solidity and endurance of our troops filled me with pleasure. He declared them the best troops in the world. He put them before the French; he put them before the Russian. He said that, though both these armies were brave, the English



were the only soldiers who faced death readily and steadily without needing any excitement. He said also that English soldiers, though they like comfort and good living, can, if necessary, endure bad food and the miseries of cold, wet trenches, with wonderfully cheerful fortitude. I felt very grateful for this gentleman's generous testimony.

While here Lorando thought he might as well give himself brevet-rank as "chief of ambulance," on the chance of obtaining *five* francs a day (the pay of that rank) instead of *three*, to which latter sum our allowance has now been increased. I could not, however, honestly corroborate his pretension, and thus allow him to usurp my place. Owing to his being a good linguist—he spoke seven languages well—he had been brought prominently forward, and had thus, I suppose, been led to consider himself the most important personage of our party at Telliche.

We left Fratesti at seven a.m. on the 9th November, under the charge of a Russian guard of a corporal and two privates. We travelled second class. The corporal crossed himself devoutly as the train started.



We reached Bucharest at 10.30 a.m. Here our carriage was surrounded by a crowd of wondering Roumanians, who came to stare at the English prisoners. We asked a Russian officer, who also came to look at us, to take us to the refreshment-room. He very kindly did so, remaining an hour with us. We also got his permission to send a boy into the town for French newspapers and books. He brought us some Paris journals, the *Constitutionnel* and the *Bien Public*, also some French romances. In the *Bien Public* I read the following:—

“On télégraphie de Péra, le 1er Novembre, à la *Gazette de Cologne*:—

“La Porte et l’ambassadeur d’Angleterre à Stamboul ont demandé en vain jusqu’à ce jour la mise en liberté des Anglais faits prisonniers à Teliche, c’est-à-dire de trois médecins du Stafford House et d’un drogman des ambulances de la Croix-Rouge.”

This, since it clearly referred to us, cheered us considerably: our position was then known, and we might hope soon for our release.

The Bucharest papers were full of stories of the peculation of the Russian officers high in rank. This freedom of the press must be very galling to the Russian officers. There



was one story of a contract for wood, wherein the Roumanian contractor would have been satisfied with a moderate profit. In this case the Russian official told him to take back his tender, and make it out for half as much again, and they would share the plunder. Contracts were said in the same papers to be going to Germany for war materials, although English houses had made lower tenders. What will this war cost Russia? and where does the money come from?

After we had refreshed ourselves with a beefsteak and a bottle of Bordeaux (the first civilized meal I had had for months,) we were taken back to our carriage, and locked in with our guard. This was about mid-day, and we found the afternoon pass quickly enough, as we had a parcel of French papers to read, which occupied us. It was here we came across the paragraph referred to above in the *Bien Public*. It too soon, however, got dark, when we had to give up reading. They now began to shunt our carriage backwards and forwards, in and out of the station, and finally left us alone in a siding. We had been there from mid-day shut up, and nature



began to assert herself, but there was no getting out. I begged and entreated the corporal to send for the key, and at last stormed at him with signs and one or two words of Russian I had picked up; it was all in vain, the *commandant de place* had the key, and he had gone to his quarters, and would not return till the morning. I then made signs that one of the guard should get out through the window first, as a security against my running away, that I might follow him. This was of no effect, and I had to endure my pain. At nine o'clock a.m., the commandant came and let us out. I was then in agonies, and remained so for days.

We left Bucharest at ten a.m., on the 11th November. At the first station at which we stopped after leaving Bucharest was a Red Cross train, with its ghastly freight. What a contrast did this present to the horse-boxes containing each twenty-five wounded Turks, still in their tattered uniforms, which I had seen arrive at Constantinople! Here was a regular hospital train, the carriages having been built on purpose, and bearing the mark of the Red Cross painted on them. The



beds were slung on elastic bands, and provided with good mattresses, pillows, clean sheets and coverlids, and I understood new dressing-gowns were provided for the patients. Not the least striking feature was a staff of some five or six lady nurses, some of them young and pretty, and looking quite bewitching in their becoming dress. I was told that this model train was a contribution from Germany, and that it could by no means be taken as a specimen of the treatment which the Russian wounded receive. I should have mentioned that one of the prisoners confined with us in the cell at Simnitsa was a Russian soldier with a sloughing wound in the leg, the second wound, he told us, which he had received before Plevna. He was certainly a more fit subject for a hospital than a prison.

At Ploesti there was a hearse waiting, with a military band and armed party, for a military funeral. I learnt that the deceased was a lady, and do not know what entitled her to military honours. The face of the corpse, I may observe, was exposed.

We stopped at Bousseo for dinner, at four



p.m., and here we were surrounded by a crowd of well-dressed people, who formed a circle round the table in the refreshment room at which we were sitting, watching every mouthful we put into our mouths. I never saw such hard starers as the Roumanians. That night we slept on the benches in the waiting-room at the Galatz station, where we arrived at about ten p.m.

November 12th. Our train started from Galatz at daylight (by-the-bye, we were now forced to travel third-class), and it was seven p.m. before we reached Pascani, the junction of the Austrian Jassi and Bucharest lines. This place, judging from the map, should be only twenty-five or thirty miles from the Austrian frontier; it was here that I had advised the *usebashi* to make his escape. It was, unfortunately, a thick fog when we arrived, and, of course, not a star was to be seen. This was against him, but he could still have followed the line of railway leading to Tchernowitz; but it was not to be. The corporal stuck close to the door all the time we stayed at that station, and we did not change carriages there or stop for the night,



as I had hoped. We went on to Jassi, where we spent this night, having to sleep in the railway carriage. We were allowed to descend to the refreshment-room for our supper, for an hour. Generally speaking, at these refreshment-rooms, some Russian officer, who spoke French, would come up and talk to us, and it was invariably the same story from all of them.

“Why was England supplying Turkey with money?”

“Except for the refugees and wounded she had not sent a shilling.”

“But she was sending arms. Had they not found them with the tower mark upon them?”

“They were old Enfields sold years ago by private firms to Turkey.”

“It was owing to the splendid breech-loading Martini that the Turks held Plevna; could I deny that that was the weapon with which our infantry was armed?”

“Our infantry certainly was armed with the Martini-Henry; and the weapon the Turks had was an exact copy of it, the Peabody-Martini, but it came from America.



Mr. Peabody had competed against the other contractors who presented themselves at Constantinople on the outbreak of the war, and had beaten every one else. The Turks bought in an open market, and the Americans sold in the same."

"Then the guns!"

"Is Herr Krupp an Englishman? for the Turks are using none but his guns now."

"The Turkish army was officered by English officers."

"How many English officers had they taken prisoners?"

"Over 200."

"Had the speaker seen any of them?"

"No; but he had spoken with those who had."

(I was the first Englishman the Russians had taken.)

"Was not Osman Pasha an Englishman?"

"No, a Turk of the Turks, and could not speak a word of any language but Turkish."

"Well, Plevna was full of British troops, their red coats had been seen several times;



and Osman's engineer, at any rate, was an Englishman. Besides, Beaconsfield was sending millions of money to Turkey unknown to the English people. All the prisoners taken had rupees with Queen Victoria's effigy on them."

This generally led to a brief exposition on my part of the British Constitution, with a reference to the budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and the officer would go away, with perhaps some slight glimmering of what constitutional freedom meant.

We were pretty well accustomed by this time to sleeping anywhere, and could make ourselves at home on the hard seat of a third-class carriage; but the want of a wash was a real hardship to a man who when at home had been accustomed to a good bath every morning of his life. Until the day I was taken prisoner I had seldom missed going out to the nearest well, and getting one of the Bulgarian bullock-drivers to dash a bucket of water over me.

November 13th. We left Jassi at eight a.m., and soon came to the Pruth, the Rubicon of this day. Here we found an armed



gendarme guarding the railway bridge. I took note of this. The Russians have taken full military occupation of Roumania, and have appointed their own commandants in all the towns and railway stations. This state of things must be very galling to a free people; unless indeed the money which is flowing in streams into Roumania is considered compensation. The Russian soldiers in Roumania and Bulgaria are all paid in specie; but directly you cross the Pruth, paper and a debased silver coinage (pieces of twenty, fifteen, and ten kopeks) take its place. A gold piece of five roubles (which they call a *napoleon*), or a silver rouble is quite a curiosity in Russia proper. I should say that Roumania must be drawing away most of the little gold there was in Russia.

We spent the whole of the day in the Russian frontier station, waiting for a train. It started at half-past five, arriving at Kichenew at eight p.m. Here we were taken to the Chancellerie. The clerks had just closed work, and I was shown an office table as my bed. This, as being broader than the seat of a third-class carriage, would have been quite a



luxury had it been a little longer ; but, tired though I was, when I stretched out my legs I stretched them into air, which generally woke me up with a jerk.

The morning of the 14th at length arrived, and we were hourly expecting to be sent to some-refreshment room for breakfast, but it was not till one p.m. (having fasted since two o'clock the day before,) that we were handed over to two corporals wearing only their side-arms, being relieved henceforth from the corporal's guard and their everlasting "Pashaw" (forward). These corporals, moreover, were very civil. A young writer in the Chancellerie was sent with us, to show us where we were to lodge, for the two days we were to stay at Kichenew, before going to Nijni Novgorod, in the east of Russia, the town to which we were assigned. These quarters were in a Roumanian house, the landlord of which at first showed a very strong objection to receiving us. We were now somewhat more at liberty. Followed by our corporals, we could go where we pleased. I went to a chemist at once, from whom I got the address of a Ger-



man doctor. This kind friend, Dr. Bernstein, undoubtedly saved my life. He pronounced me to be suffering from inflammation of the bowels and acute dysentery; and being a friend of the general in command, whose family medical adviser he was, he obtained leave for me to remain at Kichenew. At first the colonel commandant insisted upon my going to the military hospital; but Dr. Bernstein got an order from the general, permitting me to remain where I was. This was in a room ten feet by nine, in which Lorando and myself slept on two very hard sofas, the corporals being stretched on the scarcely harder floor outside.



## CHAPTER XX.

M. Lorando is sent to Nijni Novgorod—A good Samaritan—Kichenew—I leave my galoshes in the mud—Ladies' society again—My daily occupations—A strange gendarme—My only way of communicating with my wife—I am ordered to leave Kichenew—Dr. Bernstein's generosity—Strong English party in Russia—Affection of the corporal—A wounded Montenegrin—Conversation with a Russian gentleman—Russian refreshment-rooms.

ON the 15th at six a.m. the escort came for Lorando, and marched him off to the railway station on his way to Nijni Novgorod. Before starting he had managed to despatch a telegram to his mother, who was in Paris, and a friend of Marshal MacMahon. At first they refused to take his telegram at the office, as it required a stamp from the authorities. The official there advised him to apply to the civil governor, and not to the military, and this he did; the result was, that three days after



he had left Kichenew, a telegram came to the general, inquiring if he was still there, and if so, directing that he should be sent up to St. Petersburg. I read some time afterwards in the *Constitutionnel* of Paris, that Prince Gortschakoff, on the receipt of a telegram from the French foreign office, had promised to give him up at once.

I was now left entirely to myself, and dependent upon the kindness of an utter stranger, Dr. Bernstein, who, though of German parentage, as his name indicates, was a Russian by birth, claiming Odessa as his native place. This really good man, whose extraordinary kindness I can never forget, used to send one of his governesses, a young German lady—who, by-the-bye, had been educated at Cheltenham and spoke English—with jellies and soups to me daily; and when the internal inflammation had been somewhat reduced, my corporal used, every day as soon as I got up, to lift me into a drowski, and, taking a seat by my side, conduct me to Dr. Bernstein's house, where I lay upon the sofa in his consulting-room until the evening. After dinner I was



moved into the drawing-room, and enjoyed the conversation of his kind and intellectual wife, while sometimes her daughters entertained me with delightful music. A few days previously I had been lodged in a cell with common malefactors, and regularly counted over with them by the corporal of the old guard on his handing us over to the new. Now I was reclining on a luxurious couch in an elegantly furnished drawing-room, listening to Beethoven's sonatas played to me by two graceful girls, my kind host's daughters. Such is life. This existence of comfort and repose lasted for a whole month, while my strength was slowly returning to me. I used to sit in Dr. Bernstein's room all day, reading French books or writing these memoirs, playing dominoes at night with the head governess (an elderly German lady, Madame Reisperg), or chess with the doctor.

I was beginning to hope that General Shumlanski had forgotten all about me, and that perhaps I might remain in my blissful quarters till the end of the war, when one morning, the 13th of December,



instead of my faithful corporal, who by this time had apparently become quite attached to me, and had certainly done his best to fill the place of nurse through my illness, a strange gendarme made his appearance at daylight. My first dread was lest my letters to my wife should have been intercepted. I had been sending these through some friends in France, to whom I got them addressed in the handwriting of a French hairdresser, whose shop I used to frequent for the sake of reading the French papers. I was compelled to adopt this mode of communicating with my wife, as I felt convinced, from having received no answers to them, that none of the letters which I had delivered, open, to the various commandants had been forwarded by the Russian authorities. One letter to Lord Augustus Loftus, our ambassador at St. Petersburg, in which I informed him very temperately of my position, referring him to Mr. Layard, and the British Consul-General in Turkey, for information regarding me, would long before, if delivered, have produced an answer. The appearance, therefore, of this gendarme suggested to me that



perhaps I had been seen dropping a letter into the pillar-box as I had passed it the night before, or that the letter had been opened at the post-office, as it would certainly have been had it been addressed to England, or in English handwriting. However, my mind was soon set at rest when this gendarme began to talk to me, as I caught the old familiar word "Pashaw" (forward), and "Novgorod," and then he pointed to the hour of ten on his watch. Presently the corporal came in, who was better able to explain to me that I was to start for Novgorod that night. I drove off at once with my corporal to the house of my kind friends, where I learnt that this was correct. Dr. Bernstein went at once to the general, and told him that I was not strong enough to perform the journey to Novgorod without stopping for a night or two on the road, and further insisted upon my being allowed to travel first class. The general was good enough to say that, whenever I wished to stop, I had only to mention it to the gendarme who was going in charge of me, and he would take me to the hotel.



I took my last dinner with my generous friends, who continued their charitable solicitude to the end. Madame Bernstein had, I found, made up a basket of provisions for me, with a bottle of wine for the journey. I remained with these true friends till the last half-hour, when the gendarme hurried me away. For a whole month Dr. Bernstein had fed me and prescribed for me, although quite a stranger and a foreigner. He had taken me into his house, and would have given me a bedroom there, had he had one vacant; and all with the knowledge that I could not afford to give him even the ordinary medical fee, for I had thought it right to inform him of the state of my exchequer from the first.

I had the opportunity of meeting many Russian gentlemen in his rooms, and learning a little of the various trains of thought in Russian society. The Bernsteins were intensely patriotic, and this was the only barrier between us. Once or twice their kindness caused me to forget that I was not speaking to my countrymen, when my rude candour brought down upon me the merited wrath of the whole party, including the young



ladies. It was while I was with them that the news came of the fall of Plevna, and the childish exuberance of their joy was quite amusing. I was made to drink the Emperor's health that night.

I found out during my stay at Kichenew that, strange as it may seem, there is a considerable English party in Russia. These are the Russian Liberals, not Nihilists or Socialists, but men who see in England the champion of freedom all over the world, and great is their admiration of the English constitution and of the people who have by their many battles for freedom worked out that constitution. This party, though true Russian patriots, and anxious for the victory of Russia, are not anxious for the total overthrow of Turkey, since they see as the result the death-blow to their hopes of constitutional freedom for Russia. These gentlemen could not understand the view the Liberal press of England had taken of the state of affairs, and asked me to account for such an apparent inconsistency as *Liberal* papers, like the *Daily News* and *Times*, ranging themselves on the side of autocracy.



Kichenew, the seat of government of Russian Bessarabia, is a large straggling place with wide streets, neither paved nor macadamized. In summer in these streets you sink over the tops of your boots into dust, while in winter you are up to your knees in mud. The respectable classes can only go out during winter time in drowskies, of which there are plenty; their charge is 6*d.* a course. The women of the lower orders who move out wear, like the men, top-boots. I wore galoshes over mine, and one day, crossing a street on foot, I left both these in the mud, into which they sank out of sight as into quicksands.

The English newspapers in Russia have the objectionable portions (to Russian eyes) blotted out by a stamp, which must have been made specially for their benefit, as it is exactly the width of a newspaper column. I was reading a very interesting article yesterday in the *Standard*, which spoke of the eccentricities of the Emperor Paul; when I came to what was doubtless the most pungent portion of the article I found it had been quite obliterated by this stamp.



I left Kichenew at half-past ten p.m. on the 13th of December, in charge of a gendarme, whose politeness I took care, as a preliminary measure, to purchase with a piece of Russian paper money, as I told him, to supply himself with vodkha for the journey. The corporal who had been my guard during my stay at Novgorod came down to the station to see me off, and kissed my hand on parting with a somewhat whimsical but really touching show of affection.

We reached Balta Junction at six a.m., 14th of December. Here I met a Montenegrin who had been wounded in the campaign against Suleiman Pasha in the spring. He described the insane attempt of that general to push forward into Montenegro, and his celebrated three days' march through a defile, the wooded hills on both sides being full of Montenegrins, and told me how his track of ten miles was marked by the long line of corpses of Turkey's best troops. It is to this general that Turkey owes the misfortunes which are now surely coming upon her, and which Colonel Norton and myself prophesied when we visited Shipka.

I had now for some hours as companion of



my journey a most intelligent Russian gentleman, a Liberal of course, who spoke as usual in terms of great admiration for England. We were in a compartment alone, so he could speak his mind in French, as the gendarme who sat by my side did not understand that language. He was able to explain to me the division of lands amongst the emancipated serfs, since he had himself been an arbitrator between the old proprietors and the new. A great many of the old nobility, disgusted with the new state of things, had sold their lands to the communes and eaten and drunk the proceeds; while others, who had been wise enough to hold on, found their properties so much improved by the emancipation, that now their income, though resulting from less land, was largely increased. The communes hold certain lands in trust, and allot an area to each peasant according to the number of his family, dividing any surplus land amongst those who are able to pay a small rent for it, and who show by their industry that they deserve the favour. He said that what Russians looked forward to as not very far distant were a Constitution



and the *Habeas Corpus* Act. They already had trial by jury, which was working well. But he hoped that peace might now be made, as a prolongation of the war would endanger the Turkish Constitution, on the existence of which they in a measure built their hopes for one of their own.

On our arrival at Kieff next morning, the 15th December, this gentleman introduced me to the commandant of the station, and asked him to allow me to stay a night there, as I was already knocked up. The commandant accordingly questioned my gendarme, who told him that his instructions were to take me direct to Novgorod without stopping anywhere. The amiable general at Kichenew had then deceived Dr. Bernstein!

Kieff, irregularly built on the side of a hill, is a very fashionable town, and I might call it the "Bath" of Russia. There are some catacombs here, said to be well worth seeing, and if I had been allowed to stay, a young Russian gentleman would have shown me these and other lions of the place. He made me promise that I would stay with him on my return, when peace was signed, which at



that time many Russians thought would be the case within a few days. Kieff is on the Dneiper, which we crossed by a very handsome iron bridge.

In spite of the general's promise at Kichenew, I was now put into a second-class carriage, and travelled nearly all the rest of my journey in that manner.

December 16th, I arrived at Kursk, where I waited in the magnificent refreshment-room for eight hours, feeling utterly worn out, and suffering a painful return of my symptoms. The refreshment-rooms of the large Russian stations are very fine, lofty rooms. A table always stands ready, loaded with bottles of wine of all countries, prettily grouped, and all priced. Simple dishes such as beefsteaks and mutton cutlets can be had at a moment's notice. The Russian dishes I never had the courage to try. In the corner of these refreshment-rooms is generally a shrine or altar, before which burns a taper. There are also various money-boxes for charities, the Red Cross being conspicuous amongst them. The lower orders in Russia are, outwardly at any rate, extremely devout,



and when passing even the exterior of a church, will stop and cross themselves, but they seem to have little other idea of religion than this vague general reverence. The upper orders I should say were in large proportion without any religion at all.

From Kursk to Moscow I travelled with a procurator-fiscal, who regretted the bad feeling between England and Russia, and said that the countries were too dependent upon one another to have really adverse interests; that the great question of civilization in Asia should be undertaken by them conjointly; and that it would take all the resources of those powers united to resist the inroads of China. It seems odd, but is nevertheless the fact, that certain politicians in Russia look with apprehension to China, as a black cloud in the not very distant future. This gentleman was an intimate friend of the commandant of the station at Moscow, and said he would ask him to allow me to halt there. He was, however, unsuccessful.



## CHAPTER XXI.

The British Consul at Moscow—A friend in need—Russian scenery—Novgorod—The Russian subaltern—How much dependence there is to be placed on the word of a Russian—Special orders to treat me with severity—The barracks—150 in a room—The officer on duty was buried to-day—"You will die here"—I go to the typhus ward—The secretary from the Embassy comes to see me—The Russian subaltern brought to the hospital with typhus—He is put into the next bed to mine—"Our noble Emperor has set you free"—Treatment of Turkish prisoners—How many will survive?—St. Petersburg—The drowski-driver's mistake—Tea shops—Samovar—Tea *à la Russe*—A criticism of the Russian troops.

Most cities are drearily alike when you see only their railway stations; but Moscow is an exception. Merely to approach and leave it by train is enough, supposing it to be daylight, to assure the traveller that he is passing one of the three or four cities of the



world which are singular, *hors ligne*, alone of their kind. It irritates me now against the Russian authorities, almost more than their direct brutality, that they should have refused me the opportunity of viewing in some detail the unique metropolis of Muscovy. Yet even the hasty and partial glimpses I obtained from the railway have furnished my memory with one of those pictures which will survive indelibly.

Moscow must be an immense place. I think it can hardly cover less ground than London itself, north of the Thames. Of course the population, though I believe that to be very dense in certain quarters, can bear no proportion to the area over which it is spread. For this area is in very large part engrossed by numerous parks, or open plains, and by innumerable gardens. It contains also an extraordinary number of small lakes, or sheets of water—such as in India would be called “tanks.” The river too, the Moskva, runs in and out, and in again, through the city, receiving moreover one or two affluents in the process: so that there is water everywhere. This is one of the



features which must strike the traveller even if he passed Moscow on a flash of lightning.

Another equal, perhaps greater, singularity—certainly a still greater beauty—in Moscow, is the astonishing multitude of spires, towers, minarets, and cupolas. No church—and the churches themselves are legion—is satisfied with a single spire or cupola; they all appear to have them by the half-dozen. And their variety is so wonderful. They are of all heights, all diameters, all forms: no two seem alike. Some are exquisitely graceful; all are curious. The only feature common to them all is that they are sheeted at the top with gilt, like the “Golden Temple” at Amritsar in the Panjab. The glitter and dazzle thus produced is such as no description can adequately convey.

But if the myriad towers, minarets, and cupolas of Moscow, springing lance-like towards the sky, and flashing back the sunlight from a million facets, seem to challenge and extort admiration from the beholder, the houses of the city, on the other hand, appear trying to elude observation. Why else are



they all roofed with dark green, just the colour of the trees (unless, indeed, the trees happen to be partly covered with snow), with which, in summer, and from certain points of view, they must be quite confounded? This odd idea of secrecy and concealment, which somehow rises to the mind of the stranger in Moscow, is nursed also by the comparative noiselessness of the great city; the sledges, by which all traffic is carried on, glancing in perfect silence (except for the occasional tinkling of the musical bells on the horses' heads) over the snow. By-the-bye, we afterwards stopped at the station, Bayka, which is famous throughout Russia for the manufacture of these musically-toned bells.

At Moscow a young American, Mr. Smith, the son of the superintendent of the government ironworks there, very generously interested himself on my behalf. I had three hours to spend in the waiting-room there, so he rode off for Mr. Leslie, our vice-consul, with whom he returned in about twenty minutes. This gentleman was most kind, energetic, and serviceable. He took notes of my case, sent a special messenger with them



to Lord A. Loftus at St. Petersburg, wrote and telegraphed to my wife that he had seen me, and started home to fetch me the files of the *Times* for the last month and a bottle of brandy. The train had gone, however, before his return, owing to his having been told the wrong hour of starting.

The scenery beyond Moscow recalled the awful narrative of Napoleon's retreat; it was flat, desolate, and covered with snow. I could well fancy the despair that must have seized the French soldiers in such a wilderness, nothing but snow before and behind, relieved only by the dark outline of a pack of wolves, or, as they were in those days, wolves in human form, the Cossacks. In autumn this now desert track must look its best, as it is one plain as far as the eye can stretch, and must then be a sea of gold with the rich wheaten harvest.

These snowy deserts seem sometimes interminable. Even the railway train seems impotent to get clear of them. And then, suddenly, you come to a forest of pine, birch, and spruce-fir, just as endless, stretching perhaps for fifty miles without a break or



clearing. The forest, however, is a thousand times the more agreeable to the eye. The snow, in fact, which deforms the fertile plain, beautifies the desolate woods. Nothing can be stranger, or, in its way, more beautiful, than these crystallized forests as they appear—every bough and every leaf traced sharply out in ice. Nevertheless, even frozen forests pall at last, especially when the traveller is sick and weary. It is with relief, therefore, that he arrives at any town or station on the long journey.

In regard to paving, drainage, and lighting, the Russian towns are very few of them beyond the civilization of the last century. Such places as Kieff, Charkow, Odessa, being like oases of civilization in a desert. Gas seems to be the test-line as to what stage of civilization a place has reached in Russia, and it is astonishing how few towns have arrived at it. With few exceptions the Russian towns are lighted by petroleum lamps.

The nights now were nearly as bright as the days, although no moon was visible. This was owing to the reflection of the star-light from the snow.



At Chudova I left the Moscow and St. Petersburg line for the branch line to Novgorod, which place I reached at seven p.m., Dec. 18th. I was met at the station by a subaltern officer, who took me to the hotel, where, for the first time since I had left Sophia on the 15th October, I slept in a bed. I had always lain down previously in my clothes, even during my illness, with only my Bulgarian capote by way of further bedding.

I found Novgorod full of Turkish prisoners, who were, however, allowed to go freely about the town. The Hungarian surgeon, Dr. Finkelstein, who had been taken at Gorni Dubnek, and his apothecary, were living at this hotel. Achmed Hefzi Pasha and Colonel Izzet Bey had taken a furnished house in the town. The officers of lower rank had taken another house amongst them. The Russian subaltern told me that he would call the next day with my papers of parole, and that when I had signed them, the sentry he had placed over the door of my room by the general's orders would be removed, and I should be at large. I accordingly made an arrangement with the landlady, a Polish



widow, to lodge and board there. But the next day, the 19th, the subaltern came, and, after I had signed the parole, told me he had very bad news. Instead of being at large, I was to go and live in the house with the subordinate Turkish officers, and was to have a sentry constantly over me. He could not understand why my treatment was to be different to that of the others. I was to move the next day. The following day he came again, and said that there was no room for me in the house with the Turkish officers, who were already five in a room. I was at first not sorry to hear this, as these men are from the same class as the private soldiers, and were very dirty in their habits. But I was as much surprised as revolted when he told me I was to go instead to the barracks where the Turkish *private* soldiers were herded. There are no officers' quarters, it must be remembered, in Russian barracks; these gentlemen live in lodgings.

Achmed Hefzi Pasha here came forward and offered to give me a room in his house, but the general would not allow me to accept this kind offer. My experience of Russian



duplicity was now at any rate being enlarged. This was the third time I had been pledged a Russian's word and been deceived. The first time was when General Gourko told me that I should be sent to Rahova, and there set free ; the second when General Shumlan-ski promised Dr. Bernstein that I should be allowed to stop at any places on the road from Kichenew to Novgorod, when I felt tired, and had nevertheless given strict orders to the gendarme in charge of me to see me straight to Novgorod without stopping anywhere. After this I began to feel that when I received a promise from a Russian, he would perform exactly the opposite of what he had promised. The fate of my letters bore out this, for although I took them to the commandant open, and received his assurance that they would be forwarded,—only one out of seven ever reached my wife. Again, on my arrival at St. Petersburg, I found that my letter to Lord A. Loftus did not reach him until he began to make inquiries about it, a month afterwards, on the receipt of Mr. Leslie's (the consul at Moscow) report concerning me.



It was indeed owing to this almost accidental communication made by Mr. Leslie that my wife and the British Foreign Office were first able to ascertain my whereabouts. I should, had this not taken place, or had not another opportunity of communicating direct with our ambassador occurred, have remained *perdu* in Russia till the end of the war, always supposing my constitution to have proved strong enough to carry me through the privations which were wantonly imposed upon me.

As I was suffering a return of my illness, I called in a medical man, and with some hope, I confess, that his report of my real condition would save me from the barracks. This gentleman called on the general, and distinctly said my health could not stand any more rough treatment. A gentleman of the town, seeing my forlorn position, likewise called and remonstrated with the general. I waited on him myself, escorted by the subaltern, but the only answer I got was that special orders had been received from the authorities at St. Petersburg about me, and that I was to be treated with the



utmost severity. Accordingly, to the barracks I had to go. Here I was taken into a dark barrack-room, occupied by a hundred and fifty Turkish soldiers, sleeping on the boards in the most fearful state of filth. The smell from this room on opening the door struck me like a blow. In Russia, at the commencement of winter, a second window is put up inside the outer one and hermetically sealed; this retains warmth, but prevents ventilation. A corner of this room was screened off for the Russian soldiers who were in charge of these hundred and fifty Turks. Amongst these I had a paliasse of hay laid down for me. I was, however, allowed to go out for two hours a day for my meals. After a few days of this, I found myself getting weaker and weaker, and began to think the end of my captivity not far off. At this time the Russian subaltern came to see me, and at once declared I should die if I remained there. He advised me to go at once to the hospital. He was quite sure that if I applied to the general, who was coming to the barracks [that afternoon, he would allow me to do so. I



asked him whether I should then be permitted to leave the hospital as at present for meals. He said no; I should then be a close prisoner. Whereupon I told him that I preferred to risk the typhus for the sake of even two hours in the open air daily; that I was quite sure that my already feeble health would altogether break down under close confinement. He then, to induce me to go, said,—

“This place is reeking with typhus. The officer whose duty it was to visit these prisoners was buried to-day, having died of typhus caught in this very room.”

Seeing I was still immovable, he said, “Well, I must tell you the truth. We have orders from St. Petersburg to keep you a close prisoner, and you will have in future to spend *all* your time in this hole.” This decided me, so I asked the general’s permission to go to the hospital. He seemed to jump at my proposal, and I was moved the next morning, December 28th, to the hospital, where I was put into the typhus ward, having a Turkish officer ill with that complaint two beds from me.



By this time, however, succour was near. Lord Augustus Loftus was already pressing the Imperial authorities to allow a Secretary from the Embassy to see me. Mr. Leslie's letter, and one of my own, which I had found a way of getting to my wife direct, had informed her of my condition. She had at once appealed to the British Foreign Office, and Lord Derby instantly telegraphed to Lord Augustus Loftus to look into the matter. Accordingly on the 31st of December Mr. Edwin Egerton, First Secretary to the Embassy, was introduced. He just had time to say "How d'ye do," when an officer came and hurried him off to the general's house. His back was scarcely turned before the very same subaltern officer who had advised me to go to the hospital, was brought in and deposited in the next bed to mine, dangerously ill with typhus fever.

Towards evening I was sent for to the general's house, where I found his wife, whom I had seen before (she having acted as interpreter for her husband, who, strange to say, did not speak French, when I had called on him), and another lady, who spoke English.



In a few minutes Mr. Egerton made his appearance, and then we talked together in English, but aloud, the strange lady translating what we said to the general, who made notes as the conversation went on. I told Mr. Egerton, without any mercy for the general's ears, of the infamous treatment I was receiving; when he said that he hoped in a week to have me altogether free, but that in any case he would answer for my position as a prisoner being ameliorated.

And, in fact, the next day I was allowed to remove to Achmed Hefzi Pasha's house. That morning the Russian subaltern had awakened me before daylight, asking me to exchange beds with him. I got up at once and gave him mine, but thought it just as well not to get into that he had occupied. I therefore waited about till daylight, when I was permitted to throw off my hospital suit, and move to the pasha's house. I found Achmed Hefzi as kind as he was brave: he could not do too much for me; and I spent two comparatively happy days with him and Izzet Bey. They were both emphatically gentlemen; the latter had been professor of



Turkish at the Vienna University, and spoke German well and French tolerably; Achmed Hefzi Pasha also spoke French.

On the night of the 4th January, 1878, at ten o'clock the general came to my room at the pasha's, after I was in bed, and, seizing me by the hand, repeated the lesson which his wife had evidently taught him in French, and which was,—

“My colonel, our noble Emperor has set you free!”

He at once removed the sentry from my door; and I continued, in revived spirits, to read Miss Braddon's last new novel, which Lady Augustus Loftus had with kind thoughtfulness sent me along with a parcel of books and *Times* newspapers, by Mr. Egerton.

The next morning, 5th January, I received the following telegram from Lord Augustus Loftus:—

“I am happy to inform you that the Emperor has this morning ordered your release.”

The Hungarian doctor had also been released; so, after calling to thank the several kind friends who had shown us sym-



pathy, and sending telegrams to our respective wives, we took the eleven p.m. train for St. Petersburg.

At the station I heard that 160 Turkish soldiers had that day been marched to Staraia Roussa, 100 wersts distant, with the thermometer twenty below zero Reaumur, half naked, and in many cases without shoes or stockings. Half of these men must have been frost-bitten. There was great indignation expressed, even by Russians, at this wanton cruelty, especially by some Russian ladies.

Amongst the persons to whom, before leaving Novgorod, I went to bid farewell, was a gentleman well known as a truly kind-hearted man, a friend to all in trouble. I found him at luncheon with two Polish political prisoners. One of these political prisoners had been fourteen years in Siberia, the other eight years. I was told the history of the first, whose remarkably white face gave him the appearance of having been bleached, and his history accounted for his appearance.

At the time of the Polish insurrection of



1863, he had been a young artist of promise, eighteen years of age. Fired by patriotic enthusiasm, he joined the insurgents. He soon distinguished himself by attacking the Russian guard over the place where 300 of his compatriots were confined, thus setting them free. He was afterwards himself taken prisoner, and, being a Jew, was thus addressed by the general before whom he was arraigned:—

“I can understand a Polish gentleman joining this insurrection, but what right has a dirty, ill-bred Jew like you to rise against us?”

This speech caused the blood of the young artist to rise, and, taking a step forward, he laid the general on the floor by a well-directed blow. For this he was sentenced to death. The black list, on which his name appeared with those of several others was sent to the Grand Duke Constantine for his confirmation. Against all the others on this list their crime was specified, but opposite the artist's name was a blank.

“What has this poor devil done?” said the Grand Duke.

For some time he could get no clear



answer, but being interested by the appearance of mystery, he insisted upon being informed of the crime with which the artist was charged. At last he was told: whereupon he said,—

“Oh, is that all? We have plenty of generals who would be the better for being knocked down. I commute the sentence to Siberia for life.”

So to Siberia he went, and for six years he was never out of irons, being chained at night to the wooden trestle which did duty for his bed. Fourteen years of good conduct at length obtained him his pardon, which meant that he could remain the rest of his life a political prisoner at Novgorod, having to answer to his name every day before the police, under whose lynx eyes he was.

He was still young in years, thirty-two, although virtually an old man. His back was scarred by the floggings he had received. He was broken in health for life, and could never hope to work again. He was in fact supported by money which his friends in Poland sent him. It was sad to see his face after knowing his story, and I thought I should like to have introduced him to a certain



woodcutter supposed to sympathize with all who rise against their oppressors. There are some things worse than death, and there are other atrocities besides Bulgarian. What must this poor lump of humanity have suffered to have made him an aged, infirm man at thirty-two !

I arrived at St. Petersburg at eight a.m., on the 5th January, and went to the Hôtel d'Angleterre, but afterwards, as he insisted on my becoming his guest, I moved to a room in Mr. Egerton's apartments, in a private hotel. In the afternoon I had an interview with Lord Augustus Loftus. I can never forget not only the unremitting official attention which my case received at his lordship's hand, but also the kindness with which he went out of his way in his private capacity to telegraph to my wife the earliest news of my release, not to mention other little ways in which he and Lady Augustus showed me their sympathy.

From Lord A. Loftus I learnt that my first letter had not reached him till it was a month old, after he had first heard of me from Mr. Leslie, the Consul at Moscow. He had also received a second letter from me which a



fellow-countryman who had found me out at Novgorod, where he happened at the time to be on a visit, had himself put into his lordship's hands. I should like to give this gentleman's name, to show him, in case these pages come under his eye, that I have not forgotten (as I never shall) his great kindness. But I have seen enough of Russian civilization to know that I should, by so doing, be rendering him a very poor return. I called upon him when I was in St. Petersburg, to thank him in person, but he was not at his hotel.

Every one has read of the Neva, the blessing of the waters, the statue of Peter the Great, and the monolith columns of Finland granite in front of the Cathedral of St. Isaac; so I will not dwell upon these or any of the wonders of the place. St. Petersburg struck me on the whole as a fine, grandiose city of wide streets, open spaces, and lofty houses, but dreary withal, and underpeopled.

The next day, January 6th, was the Greek Christmas Day, and all St. Petersburg was *en fête*. The military especially were in their fullest of full dress. On passing the barracks



of the Emperor Paul's regiment of guards, I saw the men in the identical brass head-dresses in which their predecessors in this regiment fought throughout Suwarrow's campaigns. I was told that many of these caps, which are most carefully preserved, have the holes in them which were made by the bullets of the muskets of that day. I was gravely assured, too, that the men of this regiment are selected for their pug noses. I do not know whether it is because the headdress, which is the same as we can see on our guards in Hogarth's picture of "The Guards' March to Finchley," suits pug noses better than Roman.

I was nearly spending my second night at St. Petersburg in the streets. After dining at the British Consul's, I was put by his servant into a drowski. The driver was told where to drive, the street and the number, and I was under his charge like a parcel,—this side up, with care; for, not knowing the language, I was quite as helpless. There happened to be two streets of the same name, and I was of course driven to the wrong one. I could not help laughing



at the absurd position in which I found myself. Midnight, not knowing where to go or how to explain to my Russian driver. At last I thought of the Hôtel d'Angleterre, and as I had that address written in Russian on a piece of paper, I got the driver to take me there. I called up a waiter who spoke English, to explain his mistake to the driver, who then drove me to Egerton's lodgings.

It being Christmas Day, the streets were full of drunken people. The Russians get stupidly drunk, and then lie down by the roadside in the snow; they are seldom either jovial or quarrelsome in their cups. At Novgorod I have seen as many as six men lying thus in the main street of an afternoon.

A great Russian institution is the tea-shop, which ought to go a longer way towards keeping within bounds the national taste for spirituous liquors. There are two or three large tea-shops in every Russian town. These are crowded from morning till night, being furnished, like French cafés, with numerous little tables. Their great attrac-



tion is a large Davrainville organ, on the musical-box principle, without which no tea-shop is complete. These organs sometimes cost enormous sums; one in the hotel where I stopped at Novgorod had cost 6000*l*. It played thirty-six tunes, principally selections from operas, and was of such fine quality that in the next room you would fancy you were listening to a well-trained band. The tea is served in glass tumblers, at one penny a tumbler, with a slice of lemon, and two large knobs of sugar. If you wish to drink your tea *à la Russe*, you break these knobs into small square pieces, about the size of a pea, (for which purpose you are provided with a pair of nippers,) and holding one of them between your front teeth, suck up the tea through it. The Russians never drink their tea with milk, this would destroy the delicate flavour which Russian tea possesses. Connoisseurs will drink it without sugar or lemon, but then the quality must be superb. In your own house you would use the Samovar, a large brass urn, heated by embers from your wood fire. The tea is made in a small china teapot, about the size of a break-



fast cup. This is the *essence* alone, and a table-spoonful goes to a tumbler, which is then filled up from the Samovar, the water in which will keep boiling for over an hour, so your tea is always hot. The number of tumblers which can be drawn from one little pot seems almost unlimited, for when exhausted you refill it from the Samovar over and over again, adding more essence to each tumbler as the essence itself gets weaker. It is a very economical plan.

A closer acquaintance with the Russian army than that I obtained in the Crimea has confirmed the opinion I formed of it in those early days of my military career. The troops of the Russian line are, perhaps, on a par in point of training with our militia regiments, though inferior to them in physique. The guards are fine troops, but, with the exception of one or two picked regiments, will not compare in size with our household troops, and for military bearing and efficiency are certainly not on a par with our best line regiments. The discipline in the Russian army is far stricter than in ours : the question is whether it is



not too severe. It certainly destroys that individuality possessed in an eminent degree by British troops, and which the new system of attack, necessitated by breech-loaders, imperatively requires. The Russian non-commissioned officers are excellent. But the army as a whole lacks the true spirit of soldiers. The men do their work because they are impelled by the fear of the punishment which will befall them if they neglect it, not from any martial pride or even sense of duty. For instance, in attack they are generally marched up to the assault in compact formation, and continue so to advance steadily enough until the enemy opens a point-blank fire upon them, when, at the very time when they should make the rush, they come to a standstill: their spirit will not carry them on, their discipline or fear of punishment will not allow them to run back, and there they stand to be shot down.

The Russian commissioned officers are the weakest part of the whole military system. They do not study their profession, like the Germans, nor do they, like our officers, cultivate the manly sports, which are such good



schools for real warfare. They want likewise the feeling of *camaraderie* with their men which of all European armies is the strongest in our own. Except in Gourko, Skobeleff the younger, and perhaps Radetzki, we look in vain for any display of real talent, or even ordinary professional knowledge, in this war on the Russian side. All their victories have been gained by dint of numbers. For example, 40,000 Russians were kept at bay by 3500 Turks for ten hours at Gorni Dubnek, an open position. They do not appear to attach the same importance to good shooting that other European armies do. The rifle with which their line regiments are armed is not only wanting in precision, but is awkward to handle, and heavy. Their movements in brigade are slow and old fashioned, for, unlike ourselves, they seem to have gained little from the lessons of late European campaigns. To give my general readers an idea of my opinion of the Russian army, I may say that I should have no fear of an army composed of 50,000 British (line and militia mixed) holding its own against 100,000 of Russia's best troops in the open field.



Behind field-works, with equal forces of artillery, I would pit 25,000 British against 100,000 Russians. My reasons are—the British superiority of spirit, greater precision in shooting, and that individual self-reliance which qualifies for an open method of fighting, to which the Russians will never attain. If the Turks with the worst possible officers could on numerous occasions make such a glorious stand against their overpowering numbers, what might not *we* expect to do with men of an equally martial spirit, but better drilled and disciplined than the gallant Osmanlis, and commanded by the best regimental, and far from the worst staff, officers in Europe. A Russian on one occasion maintained to me that his countrymen had actually made prisoners of upwards of 200 English officers who had been serving with the Turkish armies. If there had been anything like 200 English officers in the Turkish army altogether—with half a dozen of them, or so, in the higher commands—I very much doubt whether the House of Romanoff would have been reigning in Russia at this moment.



## CHAPTER XXII.

## Concluding Remarks on Turkey and the Turks.

I AM fully conscious of the trivial nature of the narrative contained in the foregoing pages, so far as that narrative concerns myself. *Le mie Prigioni* are not, I feel it, sensational. My sufferings were of an undignified order; and yet I cannot bring myself to consider my six months' experiences of Turkey insignificant. On the contrary, all else that I have witnessed in my life—and my career has been a varied one—seems petty in comparison. The mass of misery I have had so long before my eyes, so vast as to baffle any effectual grasp of succour, a kind of deluge of agony, dwarfs all other images in my memory. The busy life of England, which nevertheless certainly has its grandeur, seems to me on my return as childish, in contrast



with the tragedies of Turkey, as a pack of boys playing at marbles. And yet I find great difficulty in digesting my impressions, vivid and indeed overpowering as these are, into opinions clear enough to be of any profit to a soul. I catechize myself in vain in hope to precipitate a theory. The general result of my speculations on the past and future of Turkey is—confusion and helpless uncertainty. I take refuge in such sagacious reflections as, “Well, the world will go on somehow;” or, “Things will shake down in one way or another, I suppose.”

On some particular and limited matters, however, I have come to more or less distinct opinions. For instance, on the question of the oppressiveness of the Ottoman rule on the subject races, I do not see how more than one view can be entertained. Of course, it was oppressive. I dare say it is not nearly so cruel and merciless as that of Russia has been in Poland, but it has been a great deal too oppressive for anything but disapprobation. I quite grant that much of what has been said or written during the past year by English speech-makers and pamphleteers



has been nonsense founded on ignorance—just the ignorance from which I myself am hardly emerging. Whenever a speechifier or pamphleteer has descended from general denunciations to specific charges against the Turks, he has almost invariably fallen from truth to absurdity. The general denunciations were just, or partly so; the particular accusations were false.

Thus, one prominent count in the indictment for oppressiveness laid against the Ottoman Government is the exclusion of Christians from the army. Why, this exclusion is considered by the latter an exemption. It is true they hate the *havatch*, or exemption-tax; but at more than one period, when serious proposals were made to remit the tax, and extend to all creeds the liability to military service, it was always the terrified opposition of the Christians themselves which frustrated the reform.

Again, another charge, on which we are urged in passionate accents to include the whole Turkish race in one wide sweep of abhorrence, is their monstrous voluptuousness. The Turks as a people are one of the least



voluptuous and least immoral in the world. I will not defend the pashas and wealthiest class as a rule, although there are many exemplary exceptions among them. But for the Turkish nation at large, as they are the soberest, so also are they among the most conjugally faithful in the world. Away from Constantinople probably not one Turk in a dozen sees the uncovered faces of ten women in the whole course of his life; and most assuredly not one Turk in a hundred uses the privilege his religion would concede him of having more than one wife.

The inequality in the administration of (what can scarcely be called) justice is a count in the charge of oppressiveness which has more to colour it. But even here, from all I could gather from the statements of Bulgarians themselves, it is rather the impartial corruption of the judges from which the Christian suffers, than their partiality to the Mohammedan. A Christian has quite as good a chance against a Moslem in litigation as a poor Mussulman against a rich one. I am inclined to think also that a poor Mohammedan would, in ordinary suits, and even



with equity on his side, have the worst of it in a contest with a wealthy Armenian or Greek. Such a state of things is the condemnation of a government, and perhaps of a people, but not primarily on the score of oppressiveness on the part of one creed towards another.

Yet there can be no doubt whatever of the existing oppression. I witnessed it myself at every turn. Only I came at last to see that it was intestine and official oppression, such as could give no foreign state the smallest title to interfere even by remonstrance. It was not essentially the oppression of Ottoman on Bulgarian, or of Moslem on Christian; it was the tyranny of the official over the peasant. The zaptieh robs the rural cultivator in Roumelia, just as the chuprassi robs him in India, whenever he has the chance. I heard bitter complaints from Bulgarians of the extortion of the pashas, but I heard from them still more bitter ones against the extortions of their own bishops. Opportunity alone suffices in Turkey to make an oppressor; difference in race or religion is superfluous and irrelevant in the matter.

From all the inquiries I could make—



made, too, sometimes in neighbourhoods which had been the scene of the original "atrocities"—Bulgarians and Turks had previously lived side by side in fair harmony, i. e., without discord. There had probably been at least as great cordiality between them as between Catholic and Protestant in Ulster, and perhaps as much as between Churchmen and Dissenters (of the lower orders) in Wales.

And yet I must qualify what I have been saying. I did observe an oppressiveness, on the part of Turk towards Bulgarian, which was assuredly the result of a pride of religion and of race, and not the mere cupidity of an official. Only I never saw or heard that this oppression went beyond the form of haughtiness and insolence. Even this was hateful to me to witness ; yet I confess I never saw Turkish insolence towards a *rayah* exhibited in so coarse and brutal a form, as may be seen in the vulgar Englishman towards the natives in India. The Turk does show the arrogance of a member of a dominant race among subjugated races, and of a true believer, as he thinks himself, among people



who can put up with (what he considers) an inferior creed. But instead of betraying this arrogance in a peculiarly aggravated degree, it is, on the contrary, wonderfully mitigated by the indolent, or gentle, or self-respecting character of the Turkish people.

As to the original Bulgarian atrocities, I must say that, according to my poor belief, there is no fact in history, whether recent or remote, more certain than that those atrocities were desired, schemed for, and rejoiced over by Russian diplomatists. The tidings of them excited no doubt the utmost horror among the general public of Russia, but great exultation among the wire-pullers of Russian policy. Do I wish, then, to exonerate the Government of Constantinople? Good heavens, no. Speaking absolutely, I execrate it for its carelessness in such a matter. But speaking comparatively, and with a regard to comprehensive equity, I must say that, let the guilt of Turkey have been what it may (and it was great), multiply it tenfold, and it will still come short of the enormous iniquity of Russia. And then to think that it is this treacherous and ruthless Government which



assumes to be the chosen instrument to wreak in its most pitiless form the justice of God ! The effrontery of this is so monstrous, and the veil so flimsy, that it should hardly be called hypocrisy. Russian statesmen cheat with a leer, and with the tongue in the cheek, as not expecting to be believed ; and yet, shallow as their dupery is, it suffices to delude Englishmen who are considered statesmen.

Nor am I sure that *Western* Europe is justly entitled to take airs towards Turkey of very superior virtue. Liberal and equitable measures have, more than once or twice, been attempted by Turkish ministers, only to be quashed by the jealousy of one or other Western Government. Austria has prohibited the concessions on the part of the Porte which would have conciliated Montenegro. It was the influence of an English ambassador, Sir Henry Bulwer, which overruled the piteous remonstrances of the Bulgarians against the intrusion of the Circassians into their midst. The jealousy of the various Powers, for the maintenance of the exclusive privileges of their subjects



resident in Turkey, has impeded the extension of enlightened law to the whole empire alike. The corruption and venality of Turkish officials, which Europeans so scornfully denounce, has been largely used and pandered to by European speculators. Turkey is a shameful financial defaulter, but she was in the first instance tempted and helped into debt by Europeans. Some of the recent Sultans have been recklessly prodigal, the ladies of their harem quite insatiable, and many of the ministers utterly mercenary. Turkey was not coy to borrow, but her downward path to insolvency was eagerly smoothed for her by interested European loan-jobbers.

As to the great *Northern* Power, it is a truism, which by dint of repetition seems to have lost its force, that Russia has consistently opposed every attempt of Turkey to reform and civilize itself. The more or less of Russian opposition has been determined by the greater or less wisdom and liberality of the projected reformation. If a scheme was retrograde, it was safe to be applauded and assisted by the Russian ambassador; if well-meant but unpractical and unsettling, it might



be tolerated; but in proportion as it was large, earnest, and well-digested, it was sure to meet with stern Muscovite opposition. One Russian ambassador frankly declared that "his master would never allow Protestantism to set its foot in Turkey;" and the crowning crime of Turkey, which admitted of no delay in its condign punishment, was her adoption of representative institutions. Whatever, therefore, Turkey's shortcomings and backslidings, it is, I think, unquestionable that if she had been worse she would have fared better. Her transgressions were not considered unpardonable until precisely the moment when she had begun seriously to amend.

I am perhaps mistaken, but I really believe that Midhat Pasha's "Constitution" might have saved the Empire by transforming it. The Constitution subverted potentially the despotism of the Sultan. Ministers of State and Governors of Provinces would no longer have bought their offices from the ladies of the palace, under the consciousness that the same posts might be sold again in a few months over their heads. Pashas, therefore,



no longer apprehending so brief a tenure of power, would probably have been less impatient in their rapacity ; while the presence of representatives of all the provinces in the Turkish Parliament, together with the publicity given to their debates by the press (which before the war was absolutely free), might have ultimately repressed that rapacity altogether. It would of course be necessary to begin by giving functionaries of all ranks salaries so liberal, in proportion to the opportunities of peculation afforded by their functions, as to leave them no more necessity than justification for extortion.

Here, as in every attempt to probe the sores of Turkey, we come upon the financial difficulty. Officials being seldom paid in Turkey, are allowed to pay themselves : in other words, so far as the expense to the State is concerned, they are paid ten times over. It is as if an English farmer, not having stored fodder for his cattle, should turn them in to feed upon his standing crops. It is a vicious circle. The poverty of the empire aggravates itself. No government can be economical which has not money in advance.



Turkey, just before the war broke out, was in a state of confessed bankruptcy, and yet no observant person can pass even a month in the country without the conviction that it ought to be conspicuously prosperous and wealthy. The revenue actually has more than trebled within twenty-five years, and there are obvious sources of fresh wealth offering themselves to be tapped. I am convinced that, if the estate of Turkey could be financially administered for its own benefit by English, or rather Anglo-Indian officers, as is done in the case of embarrassed minors among the nobles of India, a very few years would place it among the most flourishing kingdoms of the world. The general financial question is, however, altogether too large and multifarious for me. I will only touch, and very lightly, in one or two places the very hem and fringe of the subject.

Nowhere else in the world do you see finer crops than in Roumelia, and yet perhaps half of the richest soil in the province is uncultivated. This proportion, therefore, of the area is utterly unproductive to the Turkish revenue. For land, as such, is untaxed in



Turkey. Revenue is assessed only upon the actual crops as they stand. This system is not only wasteful in every way, but is also perhaps the most active of all causes of agrarian discontent. Crops of the same class have a habit of ripening in the same district much about the same time. The farmer dares not cut a stalk until his whole harvest has been valued by the Government assessor. Possibly the assessor could not, with the best will, visit and estimate all the various fields in his district in time enough to prevent, in all cases, some waste and damage from over-ripeness. But this good-will is generally wanting. The general harvest of a district is the assessor's especially. If a cultivator is growing anxious, and almost desperate, at the sight of his crops deteriorating day by day—the grain falling from the ears, and feeding flocks of birds instead of his own family—he must either stand by looking on, inactive and helpless, until the Government officer arrives in his own tardy season to give him leave to reap, or he must pay that officer to give his particular land precedence in examination; and he will have to pay highly, just in pro-



portion to the urgency of his case. As to those who cannot pay, or who cannot pay enough, and so cannot cut their crops until they are hardly worth cutting, it is easy to imagine their despair and indignation at seeing the hoped-for food of their wives and children waste before their eyes, and their labours of the year thus come to nought.

And this system, though very fruitful of oppression and discontent, is so unproductive to Government. There can be no reason why the proportion of the land which, as a matter of fact, is cultivated year by year should not be assessed for revenue quite as highly as the cultivation which it bears. It might indeed be assessed much more highly, and yet the tax would be less onerous and irritating to the peasant, for obvious reasons, than the insulting and extortionate practice which prevails.

But I in my presumption go much farther. I would not be deterred by the word "confiscation" from taxing, more or less lightly, all those wide districts of uncultivated, but eminently *cultivable* land which I saw on almost every day's journey in Bul-



garian Roumelia. No doubt all this, at present untilled, land has its owners, often great proprietors, who can afford to let it lie fallow, but who would perhaps be unable and certainly would be unwilling to pay revenue on it. But I would not, in the present state of the imperial finances, strain long at the gnat of their privileges—the proprietary right of the dog in the manger. I would say, “The land, all cultivable land, is, according to its circumstances of advantage or disadvantage, to be equitably taxed, and in no case the crops. Now, at your option, cultivate or sell.” In most cases the landowner would then cultivate; in none—the taxation of *crops* being abolished—would he find it difficult to sell. The gain to the State revenue would be great and almost instant. The evidence on which a settlement could be provisionally based might be collected in one season.

I venture to think that no traveller has diverged a league to right or left of the railway from Adrianople to Tatar Bazarjik, without inwardly exclaiming, “Where are the Wiltshire labourers who ought to be ploughing affluence out of these plains?” or,



“Where are the Bordeaux wine-growers who ought to be pruning their vines upon those slopes?” Thoughts of Occidental colonization rise to the mind of the traveller in European Turkey, as necessarily as perceptions of the delicious climate, exuberant soil, and often romantic scenery. It is, however, futile to pursue this line of speculation now. The time for colonization from France and England has apparently passed. It is curious all the same that, while English colonists have gone in numbers to starve in Brazil, a field so advantageous for enterprise as Turkey should have been as entirely overlooked as if there had been no such region on the map.

It may be said that any dissertation whatsoever on the past possibilities of Turkey is now silly, since its opportunities are gone for ever. Is it possible (it will be asked) to renew a rickety house from its foundations without its fall? Is Turkey susceptible of re-organization on the footing of a European power? Can it be more henceforth than another Persia? Most people will say that Russia, having got Turkey down, may be trusted to cut its throat. And yet the stuff



there is in these Osmanlis is surprising. When Sultan Mahmoud, the Reformer, annihilated the Janizzaries, who constituted his chief visible military strength, because they refused to submit themselves to drill and discipline on the European pattern, he was supposed to have sacrificed the substance for a shadow. Military critics considered him to have destroyed the traditional and characteristic spirit of the Turkish soldiery, which had after all a certain military value, in the vain attempt to animate them with another spirit, foreign and unnatural to them. According to the expression of M. Thiers, "Mahmoud had left, without possibility of return, one bank of the river, without getting any nearer to the other." Yet Mahmoud persisted; and the history of this recent war does not seem to show that the warlike spirit of the Ottoman has been much impaired.

Again, consider the situation at the death of Mahmoud. That able and energetic but unfortunate Sultan had destroyed, as has been said, with the Janizzaries the national and indigenous vitality of his army; he had lost Greece; he had lost his fleet at Navarino;



and his finances were (for the revenue of that day) almost as embarrassed as those of Turkey now are, compared with its present resources. Nevertheless, the indomitable Sultan contrived to create another great fleet, comprising fourteen ships of the line, and another great army numbering 80,000 men. This army was almost annihilated by Ibrahim Pasha at the battle of Nedjib, on the 26th June, 1839; and almost at the same time his fleet deserted to Mehemet Ali! Mahmoud himself died a few days later! The condition of Turkey might well have seemed desperate then also. M. Thiers, whom nobody ever accused of want of penetration, believed it to be so. He pronounced the empire to be shaken beyond any durable propping up. And yet nearly forty years afterwards Turkey was able, single-handed, to wage war with Russia, and for a long time with great prospect of success; since, in my opinion, if Suleiman Pasha had joined Mehemet Ali before the arrival in Bulgaria of the Russian Guard, the throne of the Czar would have been in more danger than that of the Sultan.

At any rate, if the Ottoman State is once



again to demonstrate its recuperative power, there is small difference of opinion as to the chief reforms by which its resurrection must be effected. All superiority of Mohammedans before the law, and all preferential eligibility of Osmanlis for the service of the State, must be frankly abdicated. This involves, of course, close limitation of the Sultan's prerogative, and the extension of liability to military service to all creeds and races. It is equally indispensable that, by retrenchments on the one hand, and an equitable redistribution of imposts on the other, a financial equilibrium be attained for the State, while admitting everywhere of individual prosperity. Some of the necessary reforms will be hateful to the Turks, and others to the Greeks, Armenians, and Bulgarians; yet all might probably be effected provided the absolute freedom of the press were restored, the independence of the House of Representatives maintained, and provided reasonable time be conceded.

I will, in conclusion, ask excuse for recording one or two desultory observations on points I think myself to have perceived or learnt.



First, as to Turkish fanaticism. I am told something of this is still apparent during Ramazan, when the harangues of the Moslem preachers, acting on the febrile irritability produced by long fasting, sometimes inflame the hearers to a somewhat dangerous pitch of excitement. But at other seasons fanatical feeling seems to be seldom roused except in the single case of Mussulman converts to Christianity. Even these incur no danger in the great cities; but elsewhere a Moslem renegade among a Moslem population would have a bad time of it. Christians, born such, and especially foreigners, have seldom the shadow of intolerance to complain of.

Next, I would remark on the admirable sobriety of the Turkish population, and the entire absence in consequence of the coarseness and brutality which degrade so large a proportion of our own. The poorest Turk is in many respects a gentleman: perhaps more so, often, than his countryman of more exalted station, notwithstanding the latter's fine manners and courteous forms of speech. With reference to these richer Osmanlis, I find I have made one or two trivial memo-



randa, which have, however, truth with them so far as they go. One is the strong resemblance between a considerable class of half-occidentalized officials and the "young Bengalis" of Calcutta. There is the same superficial culture and the same profound self-sufficiency (combined on occasion with all the servility expedient) in both. Another memorandum notes the ludicrous proportion so frequently (perhaps generally) observable between the bulk or obesity of a Turkish dignitary and his rank. You might almost suppose that promotion in Turkey went by corpulence. *Poor Ottomans*, on the other hand, and the Turkish rural population generally, are, physically speaking, probably the finest race in the world.

My remaining notes refer, as it seems to me, to features in Pera, Stamboul, and the environs, which must have been universally observed and may have been often recorded. I will therefore here bring my remarks and reminiscences to a close.







## APPENDIX.

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### EXTRACT OF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF THE *PALL MALL GAZETTE*.

#### THE STORY OF AN ENGLISH PRISONER TO RUSSIA.

SIR,—After ten weeks spent as a prisoner of war in Russia I landed once again last night in England, and hasten to give my countrymen—some of whom may profit by it—the experience I have gained of Russian civilization.

I was taken prisoner at Teliche, while in charge of an ambulance of the Red Crescent Society, having at the time the brassard of the Red Crescent on my arm, and being in the execution of my duty—carrying the wounded to the hospital, for which purpose General Gourko had himself told off a party of thirty men of the Russian Guards at my request. That officer gave me his word that I should be sent to Rahova, then in Turkish hands, where I should



be free. Nevertheless, on the following day I was brought before his Imperial Highness the Grand Duke Nicholas at Bogot, who received me in such a manner as at first to create the impression on my mind that he was going to order me to be shot as a spy. Against all my assurances that I held only a civil contract with the Police Minister at Stamboul, he insisted that I was an officer in the Turkish army, and sentenced me to be kept a prisoner in Russia till the end of the war. At the same time he ordered the brassard to be stripped from off my arm. This had been given me by Dr. Sarell, the organizer of the ambulance, and bore the stamp of the Geneva Convention. I had been engaged by Dr. Sarell in the presence of our vice-consul at Philippopolis and the account given of this in the *Times* of the 7th of November is incorrect. I was marched from the Grand Duke's tent between two sentries with drawn bayonets, and lodged in a *tente d'abri* with four Russian soldiers, where I spent two days and nights on damp straw, allowed, when the rain ceased, occasionally to walk for ten paces in front of this tent.

While here an Englishman rode up to me with these words, "Are you an Englishman?" "Yes; who are you?" and without giving any answer he rode off. I have been told since that this was Sir Henry Havelock, that the one-sided report in the *Times* is due to his pen, and that he was corre-



spondent to that paper at the time ; but I do not like to believe that one bearing that glorious name could show so little sympathy for a brother soldier in distress.

After this, having made frequent applications to be allowed to see our military attaché, Colonel Wellesley, then at Poradin, ten miles distant, I was marched with M. Lorando, the interpreter of my ambulance, and a party of Turkish soldiers, under a corporal's guard, to Bucharest, not being allowed to stray a yard from the araba, which as a great favour we were allowed at our own expense to retain for our baggage. The brutality of our guards was at first excessive ; they treated us like dogs. Liberal bribes, however, somewhat softened the hearts of these men, as it will of all Russians. We expended 15*l.* in ten days in this way and on forage for our bullocks, but I consider it was money well laid out. We marched all day, and at night were lodged in either a stable, a shed, or an empty school-house. Twice only, between Bogot and Fratesti, did we happen to meet with a better sort of commandant of a village, who, on the representation which we made to all of them, that we were gentlemen, granted us the luxury of a bed on the floor of a peasant's cottage. At Simnitza we were lodged in a room with sixteen Russian prisoners undergoing punishment for theft, &c., some of whom were camp-followers, the lowest of the low. In this Black



Hole of Calcutta we spent three days and three nights. We wrote a note in pencil to the commandant, saying that we were sure there must be some mistake; that it could never be his wish to subject gentlemen to such an indignity. To this we received no answer; to a second note the soldier we bribed to carry it brought back the verbal reply that it was good enough for Englishmen, and that we should consider ourselves lucky to be where we were.

At Bucharest we were locked up in a second-class carriage with our guards for nineteen hours and left on a siding, the key being in the hands of the military commandant; and during the night the soldiers would not allow us to crawl out, as we wished to do, through the windows. This night of suffering produced in me inflammation of the bowels and acute dysentery, by which I was kept under medical treatment for one month at Kischeneff, being brought almost to death's door. My companion proceeded to Nijni-Novgorod. When I was sufficiently recovered to move I was sent under escort to Grand Novgorod, six days and nights travelling, during which my constant prayer to be allowed a night's rest at some place on the road was unheeded by the military authorities. At Novgorod I was at first taken to the hotel, where a sentry was kept over me day and night. I was told that when I had signed my *parole d'honneur* that I should be a prisoner at



large, like the Turkish officers ; but instead, after I had done so, I was removed to the barracks, where the Turkish soldiers were confined 150 in a room, being lodged in a portion of the same room, partitioned off with a wooden screen, with the Russian guards and sergeant in charge. The atmosphere of this room was indescribable—reeking with typhus. After a few days here the Russian officer who had always looked after me came to me and advised me to go to the hospital, saying I should die there ; and, to strengthen his argument, told me that the officer whose duty it had been to visit the Turkish prisoners, had caught typhus in that room and been buried that day. I was allowed to go out under charge of a sentry for two hours daily, and I was ready to brave the terrors of typhus for the sake of these two hours sooner than become a close prisoner, as I should be in the hospital ; the officer then told me that after that week I should be kept a close prisoner in this room. This decided me, and I went to the hospital. I suspect about this time our ambassador was making application for a secretary of the embassy to be allowed to see me, and that they were anxious to move me to better quarters before his arrival. After two days the secretary came, and was allowed to look at me in the hospital. I was then taken to the general's quarters, where I was sent for, and a conversation took place between us, which was translated by a person speaking English into Russian, the



general taking notes. I was lodged in the typhus ward; and, to prove the value of the advice given me by the Russian officer, that gentleman was, before I left, carried into the hospital, and deposited in the next bed to me, having caught typhus from his visit to the room in barracks in which I had spent twenty-two hours out of every day.

The secretary's visit resulted in my release, and I was allowed to find my way from Novgorod here at my own expense. During my imprisonment, out of seven letters which I delivered to the commandant open for my wife, one alone reached her; and, had I not found other means of communicating with her, my place of confinement would have remained unknown to her. A letter which I had written a month before to Lord Augustus Loftus did not reach him till after a second, which I had found means of conveying direct to him, had been delivered.

From the experience I gained in the time I was a prisoner I am convinced that the present is a critical time indeed for England, where the true Russian character is not appreciated, so many of my honest countrymen being deluded by the veneer of politeness which thinly skins over their native duplicity and savagery.

I should have said that this is the treatment that all Englishmen who fall into the Russians' hands may expect, as the general at Novgorod told me he was sorry to be obliged to be so severe, but his



orders were to treat all English prisoners in this way.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

WM. JESSER COOPE,

Colonel Imperial Ottoman Gendarmerie.

*Walton Lodge, New Hampton, Jan. 11th.*

P.S.—As I learn that it has been stated that I was acting as a newspaper correspondent, I wish to give an emphatic denial to the allegation. I was employed solely in ambulance duty in the cause of humanity; although I learned yesterday that some of my letters to my children had found their way into one of the London papers against my knowledge and wish.

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SIR,—I have just seen in your paper a letter from Captain Coope, and shall feel obliged by your permitting me to answer that portion of it in which he alludes to me. The circumstances under which I spoke to him at Bogot were as follows:—I was looking for the two English doctors who I had been told were in the camp, when I came upon him walking about before his tent. I asked him—not if he was an Englishman, which was obvious from his appearance—but whether he was a doctor? He said that he was not, and followed this up by asking me who I was. I was in the act of answering him, when the Russian officer in charge came up, and told me that I could not be allowed to communicate with him. I had no alternative but to ride away.



I have never at any time written anything about Captain Coope, either in the *Times* or elsewhere. The report he speaks of was not written by me.

Captain Coope in his letter to you signs himself, "Colonel Imperial Ottoman Gendarmerie." The gendarmerie in every Continental army is a military body—generally a corps of picked soldiers. It is perfectly well known that all the other Englishmen who made a contract to serve in the Turkish gendarmerie have been actively employed in this war. One of them is now commanding a Turkish division; others are serving on his staff; scarcely a day passes but one of them is mentioned in the papers as acting with some body of Turkish troops. As Captain Coope acknowledged that he held the rank of colonel in the Turkish service, that he was not a doctor, as he had no paper to show that he was attached to any ambulance, and as under these equivocal circumstances he was still found with the Red Crescent badge upon his arm—apparently without authority—I do not see what reason he has to complain of having been considered as a Turkish prisoner of war, and treated accordingly. On the other hand, the Russian treatment of the two medical men who were taken at the same time with him, and whose status was clear, was, as they have themselves admitted, considerate in every respect.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. M. HAVELOCK.

*January 14th.*



AN EXTRACT FROM A LEADING ARTICLE  
IN THE *DAILY TELEGRAPH*.*January 16th, 1878.*

THAT there are Englishmen more Russian than the Russians themselves we have all now come to learn; but it has been reserved for this horrible war to achieve an altogether new triumph for bigotry—that is, to make an English officer turn his back upon a brother officer in distress. Two letters which have just appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, tell a most unpleasant story. Captain Coope, formerly of the 7th Fusiliers, went to Turkey last year, and accepted a commission in the Ottoman Gendarmerie, a force which was organized, on paper, by Colonel Baker, but which the exigencies of the war prevented from actual formation and service. Colonel Coope—to speak of him by his title in the Turkish force—accordingly, from motives of humanity, offered his services to the Red Crescent Society, and took charge of an ambulance attached to the corps which was formed in October last for the relief of Plevna. He wore the brassard of the society on his arm, so that no mistake might arise as to his functions. While engaged in carrying the wounded to the hospital after one of the encounters at Teliche he was taken prisoner, notwithstanding a promise from General Gourko that he should be set free when his task was ended, brought before the



Grand Duke Nicholas at Bogot, and sentenced to be kept in captivity in Russia until the end of the war. The brassard was stripped from his arm; he was marched off, conveyed across the Danube, through Roumania, and so on to Novgorod, being treated all through with a brutality so gross and systematic that it is difficult to resist the conclusion that his death was greatly desired, while his enemies had not the courage to inflict it openly. Ultimately, after ten weeks' imprisonment, he obtained his liberty through the exertions of our Ambassador, and then returned to England to tell the story of his wrongs. But the most painful part of the narrative refers to Bogot, the head-quarters of the Grand Duke Nicholas. Colonel Coope says that while walking in front of a tent guarded by Russian sentries, an Englishman rode up, asked if he was an Englishman, and when answered in the affirmative, at once rode off, taking no further notice of him. The stranger, Colonel Coope states, he has since learnt was Sir Henry Havelock; but he adds that he is loth to believe any one bearing such a name would show so little sympathy with a brother soldier in distress. Sir Henry Havelock has written a letter, virtually acknowledging the accuracy of the charge against him, but pleading that he was prevented from answering the captive by the Russian officer in charge, who pointed out that no communication could be allowed; whereupon, says the gallant



baronet, "I had no alternative but to ride away." This is a singularly lame apology for conduct which we hope and trust few officers in the British army would emulate. If he could not communicate with the prisoner, whom, by his own admission, he knew to be an Englishman, why did not Sir Henry go to the Grand Duke, whose badge he wore, and whose praises he was constantly celebrating, and obtain leave to examine into the case of his brother officer?

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EXTRACT OF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR  
OF THE *PALL MALL GAZETTE*.

THE STORY OF AN ENGLISH PRISONER TO RUSSIA.

SIR,—Sir Henry Havelock's knowledge of what is passing among the Turks appears to be derived from what he has heard among the Russians, who, as he tells us, had not sufficient confidence in him to allow him, even when employed as correspondent of the *Times*, to communicate with a prisoner, and thus to learn what that prisoner had to say. I can inform him, however, that he is entirely mistaken in supposing that "all the other Englishmen who made a contract to serve in the Turkish gendarmerie have been actively employed in this war." With



the exception of those of them who, like Baker Pasha, Colonel Allix, and Colonel Baker, V.C., have obtained commissions in the regular army, they have been no more actively employed in the war than Sir Henry Havelock himself. It is true that they have all desired to be so employed; but the Turkish Government has refused to allow it, regarding the gendarmerie in the light of an armed police, to be used for the internal security of the country. When I left Constantinople, at the end of December, the English officers of gendarmerie were daily besieging the Seraskierate with requests for employment in the war, and were daily being told that their functions would begin with peace. The Turks, I may add, put no difficulty in the way of any person known to them who desires to see and to speak with their Russian prisoners. Reouf Pasha placed an aide-de-camp at my disposal for this very purpose.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

THOS. GIBSON BOWLES.

*January 16th, 1878.*

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SIR,—The letter of Sir Henry Havelock on this subject, which appeared in your number of Tuesday, has only just been brought to my notice. Perhaps



Sir Henry Havelock will allow me to correct him on one or two points.

I was in the charge of a Russian soldier armed with a rifle when he rode up to me, and not of an officer. It is not "perfectly well known that all the other Englishmen who made a contract to serve in the Turkish gendarmerie have been actively employed in this war." Out of seventeen Englishmen, four only had at that time offered their services in the army. These four received commissions; whereas the other thirteen who remained in idleness at Pera held only legal documents. One or two others may have joined the army since, but I am in a position to state positively that all have not done so. I have not complained of being treated as a Turkish prisoner of war, but of *not* being treated as such, instead of as a convict. My treatment was inconsistent; either I was a Turk, and should have received the same treatment as the Turkish prisoners, or else I was an Englishman, and should have been handed over to England. The fact of my being free now proves which I was. The brassard I wore on my arm, which bore the stamp of the Geneva Convention, was itself a document. The status of both the medical men who were taken at the same time was not so clear as Sir Henry Havelock would have it supposed; one of them had no more documents to show than I had myself, as he had lost them. They received most kind treatment,



while there was some hope of securing their services in the Russian hospital—surgeons being much wanted at the time. I have met both these gentlemen since my return to England, and they both tell a different tale to Sir Henry Havelock's of their subsequent treatment.

Sir Henry Havelock is very eager to defend his friends the Russians; but may I ask him what he has to say to their hiding away for one month my letter to the British Ambassador? It matters little whether Sir Henry Havelock used the word "Doctor" or "Englishman;" when he addressed me at Bogot he admits that he knew my nationality. The influence which he wishes his countrymen to believe he had at the Russian head-quarters would have been quite sufficient to have obtained for him an interview with me, and to have saved me from my subsequent sufferings.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

WM. JESSER COOPE,  
Colonel Imperial Ottoman Gendarmerie.

*January 16th.*











George Washington  
1799







Coope, William Jesser

A prisoner of war in Russia: My experiences amongst the refugees, with  
the Red Crescent By Col. William Jesser Coope

London 1878

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